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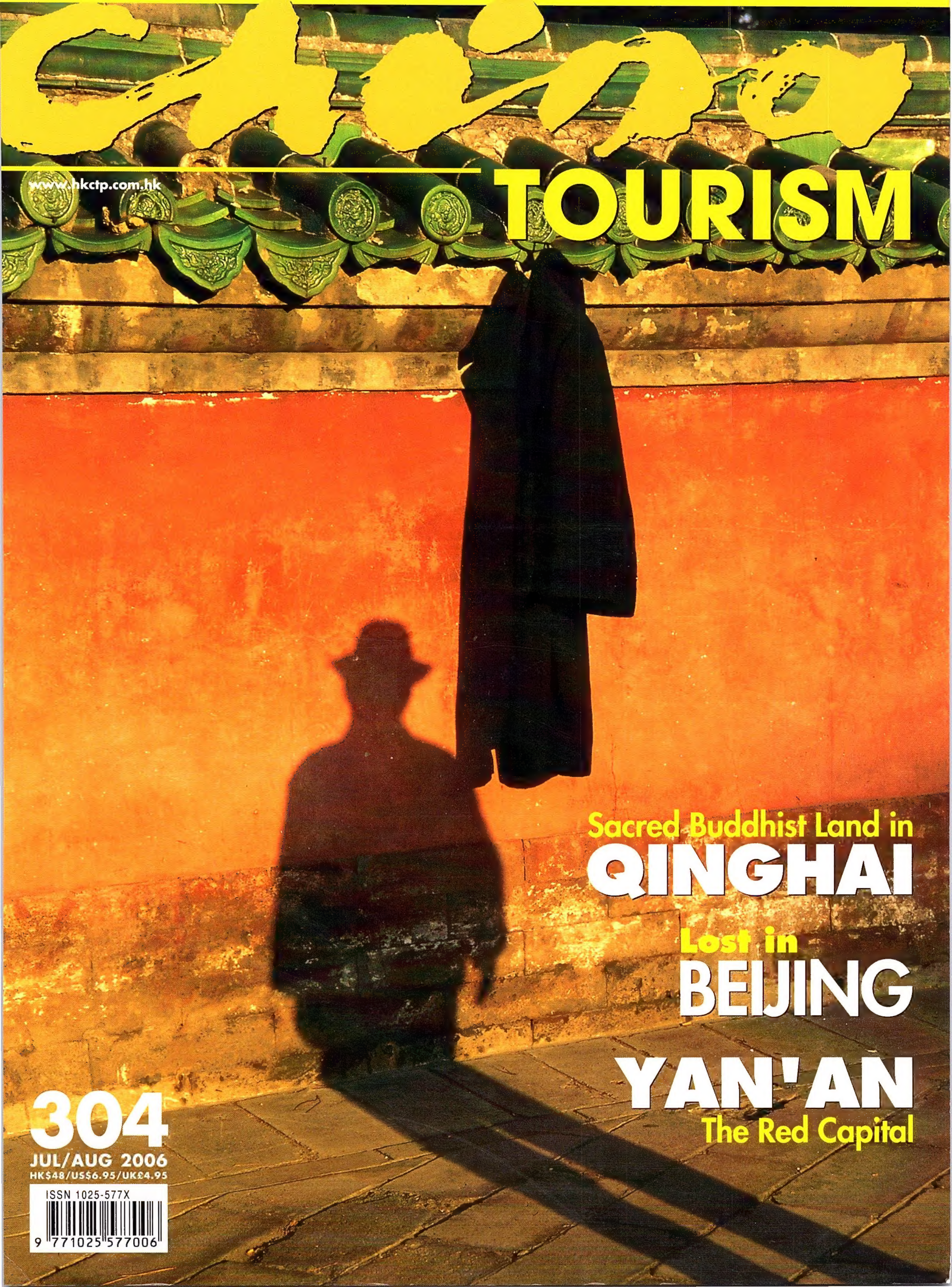

Sacred Buddhist Land in

QINGHAI

Lost in

BEIJING

YAN'AN

The Red Capital

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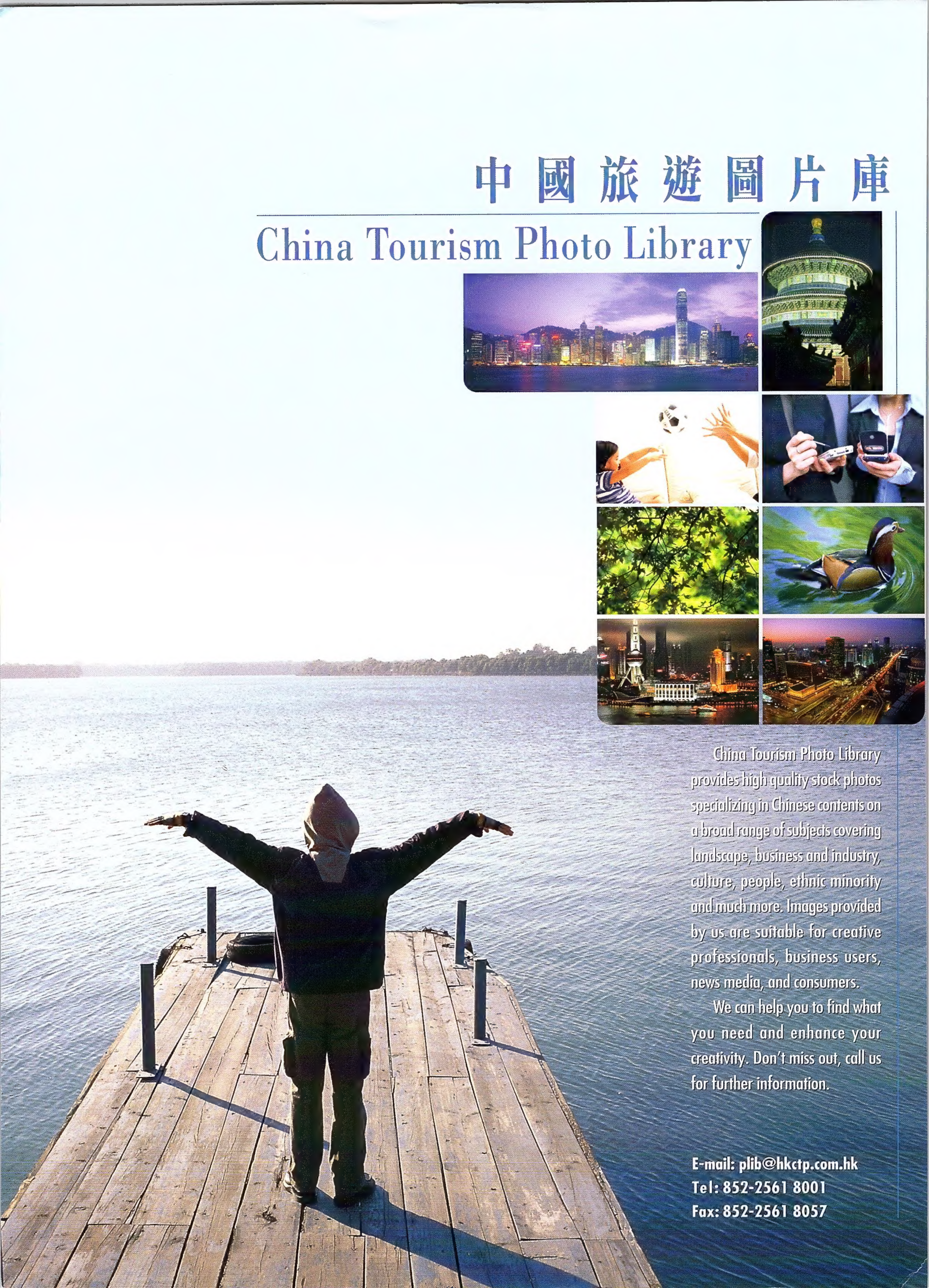

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A Sacred Buddhist Land—
Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai

Photos • Shi Baoxiu Article • Bai Yu

Nearly every village in the Tongren County seat, the capital of the prefecture, has a Tibetan lamasery, and each household has a family shrine. People dedicate their lives to the pursuit of Buddha-hood. In such a natural and cultural setting, the singular Regong Art emerged...

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Lost in Beijing

Photos • Henry Lee, Wang Wenbo, Yu Qiong Article • Florence Chan

People say five days is supposed to be plenty of time to "see" Beijing and for a long time I believed this was true. Then I came to realize that Beijing's greatness doesn't lie in her size, but in her content. Beijing is a city of reality in the fullest sense. How can the Great Wall, the Forbidden City and Tian'anmen Square alone represent it? I have no idea where I should start to tour Beijing.

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Crowne Plaza Shanghai

Perfect Bond between East and West

The Crowne Plaza Shanghai located on prosperous Panyu Road was the first Inter-Continental Group hotel to open in the "Pearl of the Orient". Since then the internationally renowned hotel has attracted many famous personalities and the respect of the global hospitality industry.

2

3

When I walked into the cozy lobby of the Crowne Plaza Shanghai, a live band performing at the lobby lounge caught my eyes. Three young ladies wearing the Chinese Qi Pao played the piano, Chinese er hu and lute reflecting the perfect combination of western and eastern key elements.

As one of the international hotel brands under the InterContinental Hotels Group, Crowne Plaza Shanghai has been chosen by more and more 500 multi-national companies as well as airlines. With the high standards of comprehensive service, high quality of food and beverage and security service, Crowne Plaza Shanghai won Hotel Association's Security Management Awards for more than eight Consecutive years from 1993. As host hotel of the Shanghai International Film Festival, they host many international and Chinese movie stars.

With its strategic city center location, this hotel offers easy access to the commercial districts, consulates, exhibition venues and shopping areas. It takes only 20 minutes to Hongqiao Airport and 50 minutes to Pudong Airport. 500 guestrooms, gym, indoor swimming pool, Crowne Café, Xin Yuan Chinese restaurant, Buon Appetito Italian restaurant, and Charlies Bar, one of the most popular bars in Shanghai on Times Asia, make the whole trip memorable.

1. Chinese Musicians at hotel lobby
2. Won Security Management Awards from 1993
3. High-speed check-in service

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Photo • Chen Tuanjie Article • Stone

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Worrisome Beijiang River

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Water is a matter of life and death, of prosperity and demise. We should treat it with wisdom and respect.

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Hainan Retreat

Photos & Article • Kristy Wong

Bali, Cebu, Phuket, Sabah and the Maldives are good, but China's Hainan Island has the features of the above all, and at a much lower cost!

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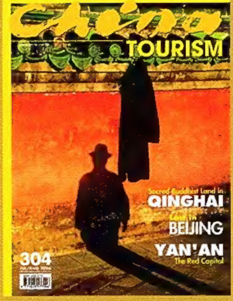

Cover: Shadow of a man at Temple of the Earth, Beijing (by Tsai Jung Feng)

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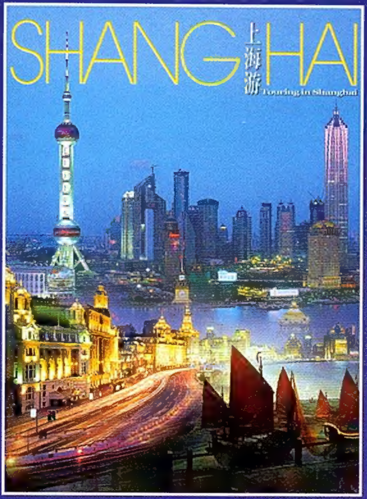
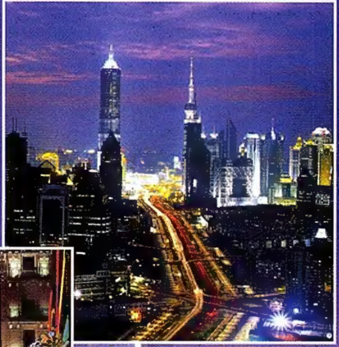


Shanghai has evolved at an unprecedented speed for decades into the biggest commercial city in China and one of the great metropolises of the world. Favourably located at the mouth of the Yangtse River, Shanghai has a long history and a rich culture. Commercial tower blocks and traditional buildings exude their individual charms simultaneously in the Pudong District, where hundreds of buildings in different styles, old or new, are collectively known as the Exposition of World Architecture. A kaleidoscope of entertainments and festivals of Old Shanghai attracts scores of entrepreneurs and travellers alike. "Touring in Shanghai" takes you deeper into this vibrant city through spectacular photography, along with outlines for more than 10 different kinds of tours including a shopping tour, popular tourist sights, cultural excursions, and more. Practical information summarises accommodations, transport and dining options, and tourist maps are also included. "Touring in Shanghai" is the latest, most comprehensive travel pictorial of Shanghai available in Hong Kong.



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FROM THE EDITOR

Travel by HEART

Sometimes a place we have visited makes such a good impression that we never forget it, even if we have only been there once. For Zhao Cheng'an, a photographer and regular contributor to *China Tourism* who died of a heart attack in March, that place was the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. In this issue, we learn how he devoted nearly his entire life to capturing the scenery of Xinjiang and finally published a book to present this beautiful place to the rest of the world.

Our two feature stories offer vastly different perspectives on the importance of maintaining tradition. The first concerns the lesser-known Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Region in Qinghai Province. To Tibetan Buddhists it is a sacred land where every home has a shrine. It is also the birthplace of the striking Regong art. Our reporters introduce you to the brilliant history and culture of the place.

In the second feature, we asked a young reporter to explore the country's capital for the first time. She had put off visiting Beijing, believing such a famous and important city would always be there, well-protected for future visits. To her surprise, many of the structures and neighbourhoods that have characterized the city for centuries are slated for demolition or being dismantled as part of the modernization plans leading up to the 2008 Olympics. Traffic jams and air pollution further obscure this disappearing city. Luckily, an old resident becomes her guide and shows her the real Beijing, before it vanishes forever.

With an open mind and a sincere heart, you will always gain more than you expect from every journey.

(by Shi Baoxiu)

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF INTERCONTINENTAL PUDONG SHANGHAI

— A TALK WITH DAVID TRAVERS

David Travers

The hotel facade

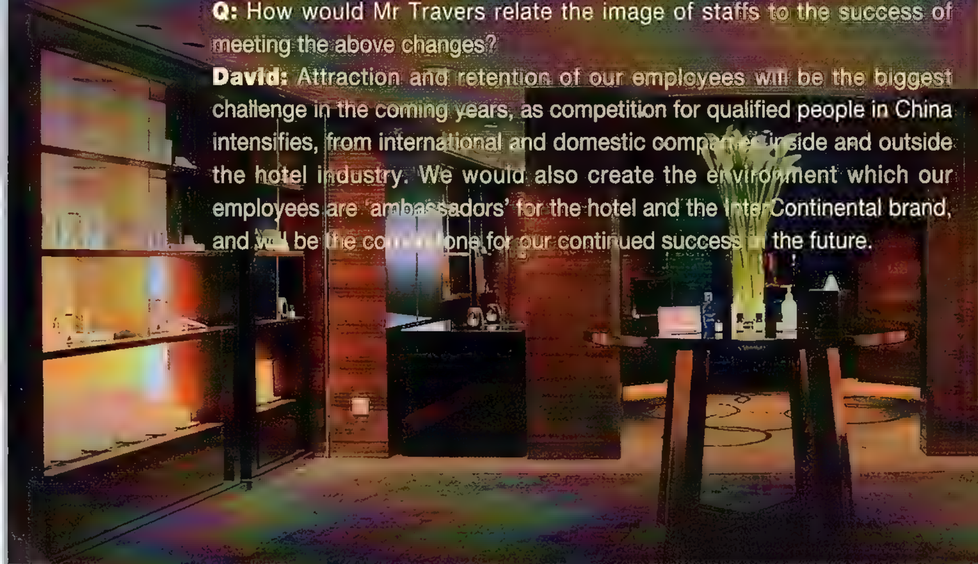
Since April 2003, David Travers has been the General Manager of InterContinental Pudong Shanghai. In late June 06, the hotel celebrates its 10th anniversary. David talks about his expectations and shares his experiences in leading one of the top international hotels in Shanghai.

Q: What do you think is the main strength of InterContinental Pudong Shanghai ?
David: There are several strengths that InterContinental Pudong Shanghai offers all our guests confidence and satisfaction. Firstly, the hotel belongs to the global InterContinental brand and IHG's global loyalty programme (Priority Club), both of which represent a promise of excellent service. At a local level, the hotel's tradition & reputation as Pudong's first 5-star hotel, its excellent location close to the subway and other major routes to Puxi, and with easy access to the major convention, exhibition centres, as well as the international airport, have all helped to make the InterContinental a market leader.

Q: What principles do you have to manage the hotel?
David: By focusing on the 'simple' business principles: First, by regular upgrading and improvement of the hotel product, such as our newly opened 'I-Spa' in early 2006. Second, by creating the right work environment, so that the hotel is able to attract & retain the best employees. Third, by keeping a strong focus on our guests to make sure that we deliver the InterContinental brand promise. Finally, by using the support facilities & expertise of the IHG Group & the hotel Owning Company to get the best financial outcomes for our business.

Q: After celebrating its 10th anniversary, how would the hotel strengthen existing services meanwhile to develop new management concept to meet the increasing needs of guests and keen competition?
David: At both company and hotel level, we are continually 're-inventing' what we do, to make sure that we are delivering the best product and service to our customers at the best value. This may happen in a variety of different ways — new technology, product upgrade, new service and facilities, etc. One thing we don't do is to stand still and not look all the time, at how things could be done better!

Q: How would Mr Travers relate the image of staffs to the success of meeting the above changes?
David: Attraction and retention of our employees will be the biggest challenge in the coming years, as competition for qualified people in China intensifies, from international and domestic companies inside and outside the hotel industry. We would also create the environment which our employees are 'ambassadors' for the hotel and the InterContinental brand, and will be the cornerstone for our continued success in the future.



The new 'I-Spa' room

Jun 18 ~ Sept 18 **Zhejiang**

Liuxijiang River Water-splashing Gala

During the festival, there will be grand performance from the Guangxi Nationality Music & Dance crew. Travellers can enjoy a cooler summer with the splashing water, enjoy the *lusheng* (a kind of bamboo music instrument) music, bamboo dance, and many more ethnic practices.

Jun 30 ~ Aug 20 **Shandong**

Lotus Festival in Minghu Lake, Jinan

The two-month long lotus festival feasts visitors with not only charming flowers, but also cultural performances which have inscribed literature works from deceased renowned poets and legendary figures. Not to be missed, one should try the dishes made by lotus flowers - yummy!

Start from Jul 19 **Yunnan**

Yi Torch Festival

On the 24th of the sixth lunar month, when the handle of the Big Dipper turns upward, Torch Festival, Yi people's New Year according to Yi calendar begins. Torches are kindled at night to expel evil and pray for prosperity. Many activities are held, including wrestling, bull fighting and horse racing.

2006

JUL/AUG

Now ~ end of Oct **Liaoning**

Int'l Horticultural Expo', Shenyang

Covering more than five sq km in a forest, the Expo' integrates gardening of different styles from 23 foreign countries and 53 Chinese cities and shows to the visitors a beautiful picture of 'man and nature in harmony'. Based on Shengyang Arboretum, the exposition site consists of 95 international, national and special gardens, four major buildings, an entrance plaza and a lake area.

July 15 **Shandong**

The 16th Qingdao Int'l Beer Festival

The Qingdao International Beer Festival was first held in 1991, and has since become an annual event, which takes place at the Qingdao Tourist Resort. Full-length variety shows, parades of artistic floats, fashion shows, fireworks display at the beach, sports competitions, a symposium on beer-making technology, and business talks.

Start from Jul 9 **Inner Mongolia**

Nadam Tourist Festival

The event will be more exciting this year, since it is the 800th anniversary of the founding of the Mongolian empire by Genghis Khan. Nadam, meaning "entertainment" in Mongolian language, has its roots in the nomad wedding assemblies and hunting extravaganzas of the Mongol Army. The festival involves lots of horse racing, wrestling and archery, combined with food, music, handicrafts, which soak travellers up the jubilant atmosphere.

Jun 26 ~ Jul 24 **Shanxi**

Wutai Mountain Tourist Month

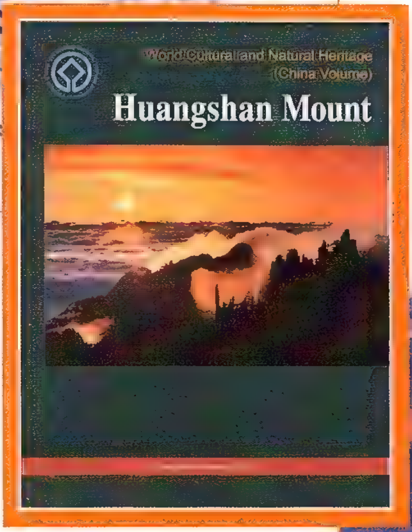
Visitors are invited to join the trail of holy pilgrims in this China's only mountain where both Chinese Buddhism and Tibetan Lamaism are practiced harmoniously. Large-scale Buddhist ritualistic ceremonies, folk art activities, and a large mule and horse fair.

Mt. Huangshan, situated in the south of Anhui Province, is one of the most famous scenic areas in China. Being put into the World Heritage List, it is also granted with two laurels of cultural heritage and natural heritage by the UNESCO's World Heritage Commission.

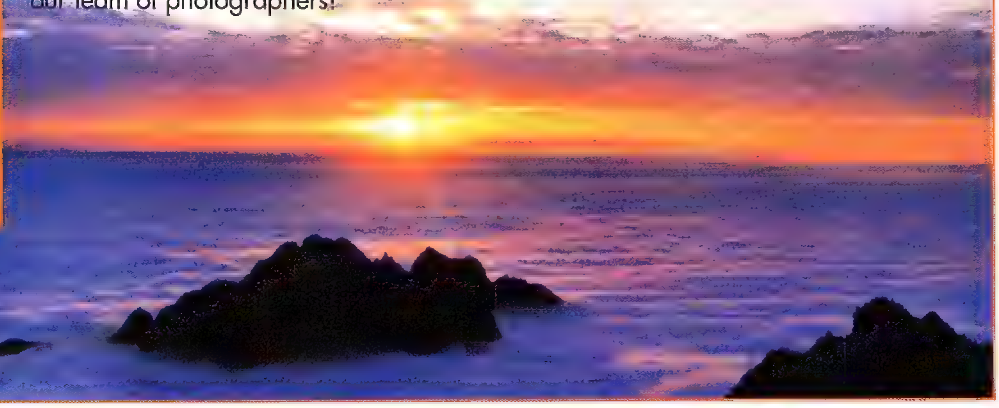
The landscape of the mountain is a typical granite hoodoo landform shaped during the long geological periods by several tectonic movements in the crust. Mt. Huangshan has long been famous for its strange-looking pine trees, grotesque rocks, sea of clouds and hot springs.

All over one thousand metres above sea level, there are 77 peaks in the scenic area of almost two hundred square kilometres. Granite rock forests and rock columns together with massive rocks scatter everywhere. Moreover, Mt. Huangshan is a diverse ecosystem with a treasure of wildlife. There are approximately 1450 species of plants, 300 species of vertebrates and 170 species of birds.

Combined unique scenery and magnificent sea of clouds, the beauty of Mt. Huangshan has continued to fascinate endless visitors. Catch a glimpse of its glory in this "Huangshan Mount" pictorial that is filled with breath-taking images taken by our team of photographers!



World Cultural and Natural Heritage
(China Volume)
Huangshan Mount



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Natural Beauty of Sayram Lake to Be Recaptured

Local governments of the Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture and the Bortala Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region are to recover the natural landscapes of the 457-sq-km Sayram Lake, a state-level nature reserve, by the year 2008. Both the new Sayram tourist zones planned by Ili and Bortala will be kept a distance from the lake with all the lakeside holiday resorts being removed after 2008.

The lake is a wonderful natural water resource and is surrounded by lush grasslands and snow-capped peaks. However, over the past decades, tourist facilities have been built throughout the area by various investors and the planning and construction of projects has been uneven. This has damaged the natural landscape of the area.

Qingdao to Build Deepwater Palace

Regarded as 'Swiss of the Orient', Qingdao city located in Northeast China's Shandong Province is going to be built China's first Crescent Hydropolis Resorts Palace. The project is operated by the Crescent Hydropolis Resorts Palace project in China, and the palace, occupying 33,000 square metres in both land and sea areas, is expected to open for public in 2009.

Hotel Chain Plans to Expand in China

WORLDHOTELS, a worldwide hotel group for independent hotels and regional hotel brands, plans to grow its China member hotels from the existing 30 to 50 by the end of July in 2008. Currently the company's Chinese member hotels are mainly located in the nation's major cities, with six in Beijing, six in Shanghai and seven in Hong Kong.

National Protection Base for Rare Dolphin to Be Built

China will set up its first reserve for the highly endangered Chinese white dolphin off the coast of Zhuhai city in Guangdong Province.

The city has set aside 460 sq km for the reserve in Guandi bay at Qi'ao Island and will start construction before the end of 2006. An emergency rescue center for the dolphins, also called 'pandas in the ocean' for their rarity, will be built during the initial construction period.

The Chinese white dolphin is one of the most endangered species in the world. Its' population is around 2,000 in China, over 1,000 of which are living in Pearl River Estuary.

Pearl River to Adopt Fishing Ban in 2007

China will impose a fishing ban in the valley of Pearl River, the second largest among its kind in China, as part of the country's effort to keep a sustainable development and protect the ecological environment of the river. The fishing ban will go into effect starting from 2007. According to the scheme, fishing will be forbidden in the Pearl River Delta region between April and May every year, and the ban will cover the mainstream of the Pearl River, its branches and all lakes connected to its branches.

Egypt Theme Park Opens in Beijing

Co-organized by the Egyptian Embassy in China, the "Egyptian Theme Park" event, which is to last from May 26 to October 10, will run under the title of the Hollywood blockbuster film 'The Mummy Returns', as some of the thrilling games are adapted from the film's frightening catacomb scenes.

The theme park includes four features — live Egyptian dancing, a labyrinth to get lost in, games, and special foods. The labyrinth is a representation of the mummy world as it was in ancient Egypt, with some special stunts added in. The theme park has previously toured to more than 10 countries in Europe and North America, and this is its second time in China following its great success in Shanghai last year.

Environment Centres Set to Curb Pollution

In the next five years, China plans to build a more complete environmental protection enforcement system by building three regional supervision centres, adding supervisory staff and improving a public tip mechanism.

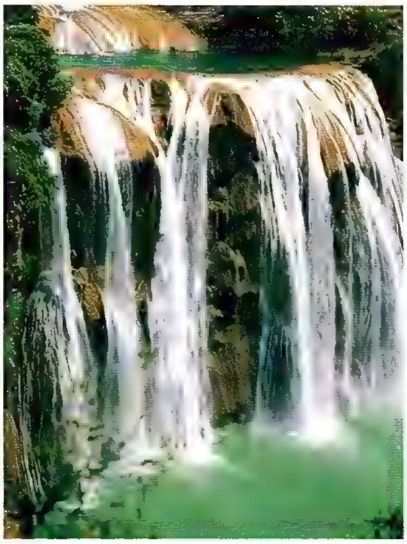
The regional centres will be built in the northwest, northeast and southwest regions.

Along with centres in Nanjing and Guangzhou that were built in 2002, these new centres will help solve serious environmental problems involving many provinces in the regions. Besides, a three-tier environmental supervision system on the national, provincial and city levels would be set up to monitor and supervise 65 per cent of major pollution makers in the country by 2010.

'Fairy Dragon Cave' to Open at Huangguoshu

A new scenic spot, 'Fairy Dragon Cave', will be added to the list of attractions at the Huangguoshu Waterfall Scenic Area, a famous tourist destination in southwest China's Guizhou Province.

With a typical karst topography, the area around the Huangguoshu Waterfall boasts a cluster of fascinating water-eroded caves. 'Fairy Dragon Cave', located four kilometres upstream from the waterfall, is one of the most interesting among all the caves. Besides its karst features, it also used to be a military stronghold of the local ethnic minority groups, with some military facilities still remaining. It will take about an hour to go through the 1,600-metre-long sightseeing pathway in the cave.



Ferry on Bohai Strait to Operate in August

A new ferry service that can carry trains, motor vehicles and passengers, and cut more than 1,500 km from a journey between the cities of Dalian and Yantai, is to begin trial service in August. Crossing the Bohai strait in North China and linking the two port cities in Liaoning Province and Shandong Province, the ferry service cost more than three billion yuan to build.

Currently trains and vehicles travelling from China's northeast region to the Shandong Peninsula have to go through Shanhaiguan in Hebei Province and then to Tianjin, a journey of 1,779 km. The ferry will travel 170 km across the Bohai Strait shortening the journey from Shandong Peninsula to Northeast China by 1,609 km.

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Travel

Grand Canal Rediscovered as Hot Scenic Spot

Recently, with its designation as a "Key State-level Cultural Relic", the Grand Canal is now being rediscovered as a "new" popular tourist destination.

Since 1999, about 30 archeological sites have been dug out along the 20-km-long waterway, and restored to their original appearances, thus creating a major tourist attraction in Liaocheng, Northeast China's Shandong Province. In 2005, the city brought in tourism revenues of more than 2 billion yuan.

The government of Hangzhou, the southern end of the canal, is planning to construct a substitute watercourse to take over the river transportation that is currently a major threat to the environment of the Grand Canal. Meanwhile, people in Tongzhou district of Beijing are associating ancient canal structures with Olympic tourism.

Jilin

Four Border Tours Added

The National Tourism Bureau has recently approved four new China-Korea (Chaoxian) tour routes, in order to provide more choices for people who are interested in travelling to Korea. The four new routes are: three-day tour from Huichun (Jilin) to Rajin and Sonbong (Korea); two-day tour from Tumen (Jilin) to Onsong-gun (Korea); three-day tour from Helong Ancient City (Jilin) to Jangyon-kun and Samjiyon-gun (Korea), and one-day tour from Linjiang (Jilin) to Jiangjun (Korea).

Aviation

Hainan Airlines to Operate Flights to Shanghai and Brussels

Hainan Airlines, China's fourth largest airline company, will launch intercontinental round-trip flights from Shanghai to Brussels via Beijing. The Hainan Airlines and his Belgian counterpart Brussels Airlines will operate the flight from July. Boeing 767 model will be used to fly the route every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday.

Guangdong

Famous Lighthouse in Zhuhai Selected on National Postcards

Guishan Island of Zhuhai city, located in South China's Guangdong Province, has recently been selected as a spot on the "Modern Lighthouses" postcard series printed by national post station. This is the second time which Zhuhai's scenic spot is chosen as a topic of national memorial stamp since 1994.

Shanghai

Free Hotline for Foreigners

Expats who need basic information about Shanghai can now turn to a free hotline offered by the municipal government. The Shanghai Call Centre provides both English and Chinese information about tourist destinations, culture, sports, trade, medical care and other issues of daily life in Shanghai. The hotline will run 24 hours a day and seven days a week and is backed by a group of 12 operators, all graduates with bachelor degrees.

Sponsored by the information office of Shanghai municipality and the foreign affairs office of Shanghai municipal government, the call centre was set up by the Wenhui-Xinmin United Press Group. Hotline: 86-21-962288

Gansu

Infrastructure Improved to Boost Silk Road Travel

In order to make the city more attractive and entice tourists to stay longer, Dunhuang city in West China's Gansu Province is boosting its tourism industry by recreating an image of how it was during both the Han (206 B.C.—220) and Tang (618—907) dynasties, which were peak times in Dunhuang's history. The reconstruction involves an investment of several hundred million yuan, including refilling the Danhe River and building a Han and Tang style commercial street.

Hong Kong

Ocean Park World's Top 10 Amusement Park

Hong Kong Ocean Park has been named one of the "10 Most Popular Amusement Parks in the World" by Forbes.com. Ocean Park Chief Executive Tom Mehrmann said that the park will continue to offer new and exciting attractions as well as events and programs to bring people closer to nature.

Opened in January, 1977, Ocean Park is Hong Kong's unique local park with a heritage of delivering family fun and fond memories. It was chosen by Hong Kong citizens as the most favorite scenic spot in Hong Kong last year.

Macau

Image of Costa Antunes Polished

Macau has been polishing the new image of city of culture, Costa Antunes. The mixture of western and eastern cultural characteristics will be the uniqueness of the city. The international gaming hut has seen a boom in its tourism industry since 2003, when the Chinese mainland launched the Individual Tourist Scheme to permit travellers to visit Hong Kong and Macau under their own planning. Macau has titled 2006 the Year of Heritage to upgrading the promotion on the Historic Centre. Recently, some 16 offices based in overseas nations and territories have been busy advertising the Centre.

Liaoning

Afforestation Project to Safeguard Coastline

An amount of 6.27 billion yuan is launched for an afforestation project to make its 2,292-km coastline greener in 10 years in Northeast China's Liaoning Province. The programme will benefit seven coastal cities including Dalian, Anshan, Yingkou, Panjin and Jinzhou.

The local authority will plant 140,000 hectares of trees and restore 60,000 hectares of wetlands along its coastline in the next five years. The shelter project will include the establishment of primary coastal forest, mangroves, farmland and littoral wetlands. The coastal afforestation project is one of the nation's most important measures to counter natural disasters.

Shanghai

Restored Penglai Park Reopens

After one-year restoration, the Penglai Park in Huangpu District, Shanghai, was reopened on May 31 to the public, with the total area enlarged from 27,000 square metres to 35,000 square metres.

Built in 1953, the park features seven traditional pavilions and stone carvings. The stone relics were collected in the 1970s by the gardeners from the suburbs of Shanghai and Jiangsu Province. It was seriously damaged during Typhoon Matsa last summer and forced to close.

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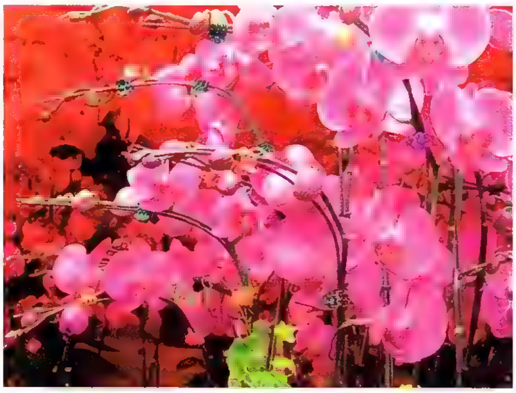
Summer *flowers*

Photos • Tchan Fou-li



Shooting your best pictures of flowers:

1. Large aperture

This is particularly essential for close-up of flowers or insects. Large aperture can blur the background in order to brighten the image.

2. Long focal length

It is always the best to make full use of the available focal length of a camera. For instance, the possible length for a camera is 70 ~ 200 mm, then you should use 200 mm one. Long focal length can create a compression effect and thus blur the background and make the image much clearer.

3. Close-up/ Going macro

When taking a particular photo, if you can use close-up, the image can be highlighted sharply.

4. Big contrast with background

Whenever we are taking pictures of flowers, insects or other objects, remember to create a bigger contrast between the image to be taken and the background in order to create a highlighting effect.

5. Long-distance background

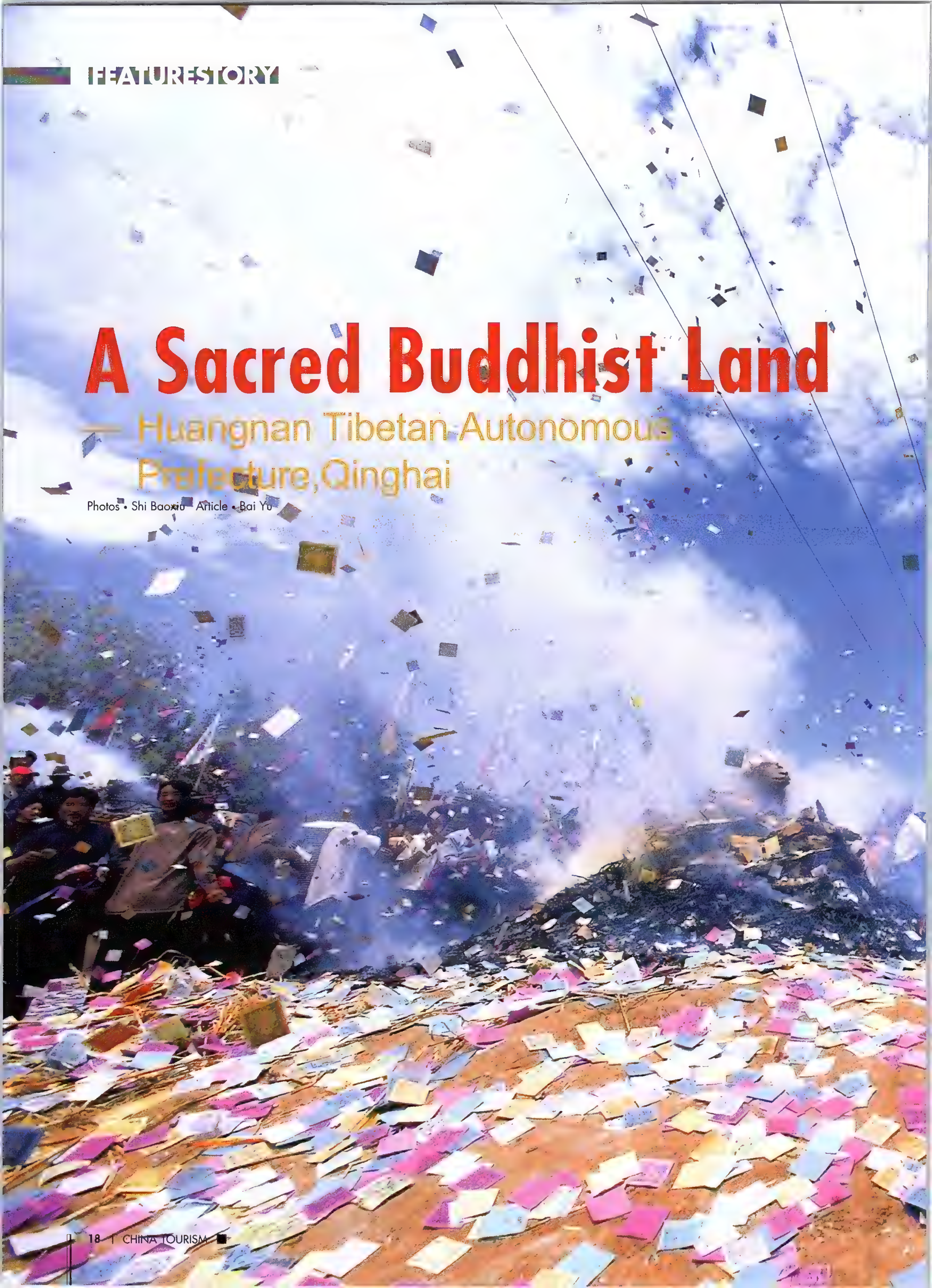
If you have applied the above four tips but still cannot take a good picture, it should be the problem of the distance of the image and the background. Therefore, you can try to move the image away from the background if possible (e.g. a plant). Then, the image can be much more highlighted.

6. Tripod and other accessories

A tripod is always helpful when taking pictures. Moreover, a camera shutter is inevitable too. Accessories here mean flashlight and reflection board. They are particularly helpful when light is not adequate. However, you need to control the light coming out from the flashlight. Otherwise, the image will be distorted. Therefore, it is always the best to make use of the natural sunlight.

7. Light

Even if you can fully manage the above 6 skills, it is still futile if you do not have the knowledge of how to make use of the light. Sidelight, opposite-light and side-opposite-light can make the photos more lively and vivid. They can outline the figure of the object more delicately. Besides, during spring and summer, the sun is high overhead from 11:00 to 3:00, which results in fairly harsh lighting. For the best natural light, shoot the flowers in the early morning or late afternoon.



A Sacred Buddhist Land

— Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai

Photos • Shi Baoxiu Article • Bai Yu

Twenty villages along the Longwu River take part in the grand Holy Dance from the 16th to the 25th day of the sixth lunar month every year. (by Zheng Yuafeng)

In Kanbula of Huangnan Prefecture, the Yellow River reservoir and danxia terrain of Lijia Gorge form a scene of mystic beauty.

Somewhere along the gradual bulge of bald mountains that run from the Loess Plateau to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau a mysterious and intriguing land is concealed. Though not well-known to the outside world, it is highly revered by Tibetans. Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Qinghai Province is a sacred place in Tibetan Buddhism, due in great part to the second stage of its development during the 11th century.

The unusual danxia terrain is a feature of the area. The Longwu River, replenished by nine tributaries, nourishes a "Golden Valley". Nearly every village in the Tongren County seat, the capital of the prefecture, has a Tibetan lamasery, and each household has a family shrine. People dedicate their lives to the pursuit of Buddha-hood. In such a natural and cultural setting, the singular Regong Art emerged. Including painting, sculpture, barbola (fashioning small fruit or flower sculptures from a kind of plastic paste), clay sculpture and tabletop sand designs, Regong artworks are of a high quality.

Each year during the sixth month of the lunar calendar, Huangnan Prefecture stages scores of festive events. Every village contributes to the celebrations, religious rituals, dancing, horse racing and many other activities. During the non-stop festivities, joy reigns in heaven and on earth.

Tibetan Buddhism

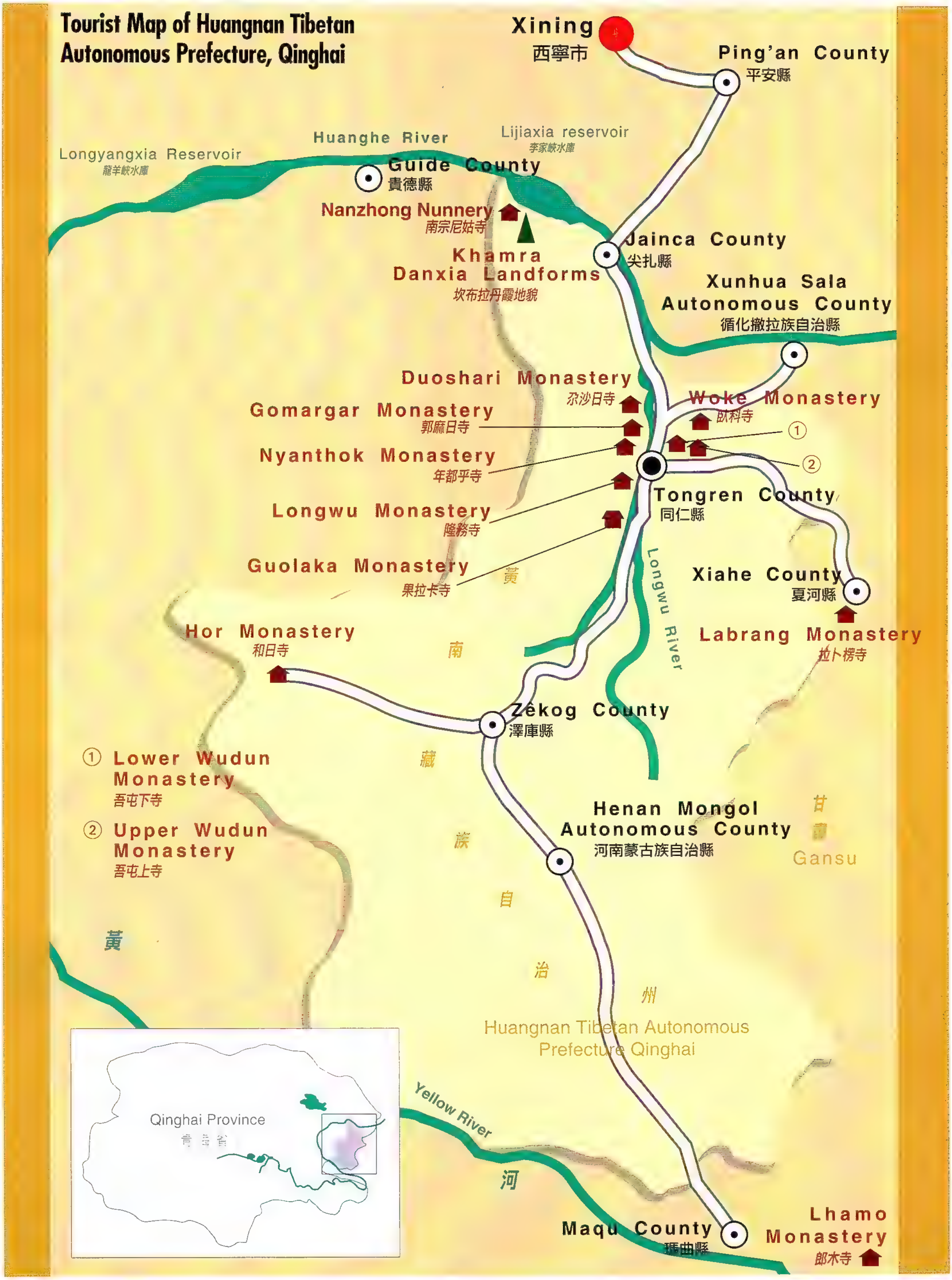
in Huangnan's Danxia Country

1. From its source in Qinghai, the Yellow River runs to the borderlands of Gansu and Sichuan where it U-turns back into Huangnan Prefecture in Qinghai.

2. The Nyingmapa-sect Nanzong Nunnery deep in Nanzong Valley was first built in the Yuan Dynasty.

After leaving Xining, capital of Qinghai Province, we motored down the expressway alongside Huangshui Valley heading east. At Ping'an County we turned south to Dangcai Village at the foot of Qingsha Mountain, or Blue Curtain Mountain, 28 km from the county seat. With just a few dozen households of some 100 people, the village nurtured a disproportionate number of high lamas and living buddhas. Over the years the Dangcai Living Buddha System has evolved, and now the Living Buddha along the relay line of this system goes to the sixth reincarnation. The high lamas and the living buddhas mostly stay in Xiazhong Monastery and then assume the abbotship of Taer Monastery, a sect which is renowned in this region.

Dangcai Village is the former home of the 14th Dalai Lama who is now in exile abroad. The sutra hall where he practiced Buddhism is still preserved. Further



Tourist Map of Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai

Xining
西寧市
Ping'an County
平安縣
Huanghe River
Lijiaxia reservoir
李家峽水庫
Longyangxia Reservoir
龍羊峽水庫
Guide County
貴德縣
Nanzhong Nunnery
南宗尼姑寺
Khamra Danxia Landforms
坎布拉丹霞地貌
Jainca County
尖扎縣
Xunhua Sala Autonomous County
循化撒拉族自治縣
Duoshari Monastery
尕沙日寺
Gomargar Monastery
郭麻日寺
Woke Monastery
臥科寺
①
②
Nyanthok Monastery
年都乎寺
Tongren County
同仁縣
Longwu Monastery
隆務寺
Guolaka Monastery
果拉卡寺
Longwu River
Xiahe County
夏河縣
Labrang Monastery
拉卜楞寺
Hor Monastery
和日寺
黃
南
藏
族
自
治
州
Zekog County
澤庫縣
① Lower Wudun Monastery
吾屯下寺
② Upper Wudun Monastery
吾屯上寺
Henan Mongol Autonomous County
河南蒙古族自治縣
甘
肅
Gansu
黃
Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Qinghai
Yellow River
河
Qinghai Province
青海省
Maqu County
瑪曲縣
Lhamo Monastery
郎木寺

1. The abbot of Nanzong Nunnery.

2. The danxia peaks surrounding the nunnery enhance its reclusive feel.

3. Deqing Hengmao converted to Buddhism at 18. She has been a nun for 20 years. (by Lu Shan)

south is Laji Mountain, a branch range of Qilian Mountain (Tianshan Mountain in ancient times), which spans eastern Qinghai Province. Dividing Huangshui Valley and Yellow River Gorge, with its highest peak rising 5,600 metres above sea level, it has long been the strategic transportation pass controlling access to southern Qinghai. As the area is shrouded in mist year-round, locals have dubbed it Blue Curtain Mountain.

After crossing over Laji Mountain and passing along the river valley for about 40 km, we reached Lijia Gorge, the second largest hydropower station in the upper reaches of the Yellow River. At this high point, a jade-like lake lies embedded between some gorge cliffs in the sprawling series of 18 spectacular danxia peaks. The Yellow River, running from the Yueguzhonglie Basin on the north side of the Bayankala Mountains and passing Xingsuhai Lake, Zhaling Lake and Eling Lake, converges in the Peacock River. It runs further east for more than 900 km, but just before it leaves the Qinghai Plateau, it wriggles in an "S" shape at the border of Gansu and Sichuan provinces and swerves back to Kanbula Mountain on the Qinghai Plateau, as if it could not bear to leave its homeland.

Kanbula is double-crowned with the National Forest Park and the National Geology Park. Mother Nature has blessed Kanbula with a unique ecosystem

Two Days at Nanzong Nunnery

Article: Lu Shan

While standing at the Lijia Gorge pier in Huangnan Prefecture of Qinghai Province one October day, I noticed a group of nuns in scarlet habits waiting for the ferry. When I asked the boatman about them, he said they were from the Nanzong Nunnery and had just returned from their weekly shopping trip to Lijia Gorge. Suddenly, I had an idea.

Guest of a Nun

On the boat, I edged towards them and plucked up my courage. "Excuse me, but may I come and stay at your nunnery for a couple of days?"

They looked at me, a lone traveller, with some surprise, but quickly and warmly said yes. After some discussion, they decided I would stay at the home of a nun called Deqing Hengmao. With her delicate features and ready smile, she seemed like an old friend.

After the boat was moored, we set off on foot for the Nanzong Nunnery. With my pack strapped to my back, I did my best to keep up with Deqing Hengmao and other nuns. They lived in a red canyon with a geological history so remote scarcely anything is known about it. As we walked along, I was struck by the contrasts of the cognitive "me" and "them", the spatial "here" and "there", and even the temporal "now" and "then". The trail was hemmed in on both sides by high mountains. Human beings are humbled in the midst of such natural grandeur. At dusk, we arrived at Jianzong Village where Deqing Hengmao lived.

Each nun had her own home, called a nishe, or a nun's house. The nishes, which are funded by the women's parents, are centred on the nunnery. Altogether they form a small village. Deqing Hengmao's home, which sat near a few of the nunnery's white stupas, was a free-standing house with an enclosed courtyard that flourished with flowers and vegetables. The layout consisted of three bungalows. Hengmao seemed delighted to have a guest and started preparing food right away. Soon, she served me several homemade dishes. Perhaps I was just really hungry or exhausted, or both, but the meal was a great treat.

Afterwards, the other sisters and Dangqie Zuoma, Hengmao's neighbour, dropped in. We drank hot tea and chatted in simple Mandarin. I learned that Hengmao had been converted at 18 and had lived here for 20 years. Each day was a mere repeat of the one before, and yet the nuns' hearts seemed to be filled with joy and gratitude. Their ultimate goal was to chant the sutras as accurately as possible, in the hope that their next lives would be better.

A Life as Clear as Water

Being so far out of the way, Jianzong Village attracts few tourists, and therefore the nuns receive almost no alms from Buddhists on pilgrimage. The simple life of the nuns is largely funded by their parents. Some of the nuns have to beg for alms to make ends meet, but they did not complain. They seemed peaceful and happy pursuing their religious goals. I told them I envied their lifestyle, as pure as clear water. So often, people long for things they do not have. We have so much in our lives, but still our hearts wander because we lack a spiritual home. Hengmao and her sisters basically have no material possessions, but spiritually they are fully stocked. But if we changed places, I'm not sure how well I would adapt to their way of living.

After breakfast, Hengmao and I paid a visit to the Nanzong Nunnery. The old, rather plain Nyingmapa nunnery dates back to the Yuan Dynasty (1271—1368). The largest nunnery in Qinghai Province, it currently has more than 150 sisters. I strolled around the grounds beneath the azure sky. As I gazed at the scarlet danxia peaks, I seemed to become detached from my body to float freely in the crisp, clean air. There was no radio signal here, and no one knew where I was. I chuckled to myself: wouldn't it be wonderful to live at such ultimate leisure? For a moment I even imagined converting and staying here. Then, after the morning session, I watched the nuns collecting heavy branches for firewood, working like men. My romantic notions disappeared; an idle person like me could never live like this.

An Uphill Climb to Enlightenment

Still, my enchantment with the place continued. Charmed by the thought of a monastic life atop a towering peak, I decided to climb to the Aqiong Nanzong Monastery. Some 300 metres up Nanzong Peak, it was accessible by a steep trail cut along the north face of the cliff. In half an hour I was nearing the summit when I came to a wooden ladder parallel with the now vertical cliff. When the ladder ended, a series of wet and slippery footholds carried on up the cliff face. I continued climbing with both hands and feet, scared and sweating. Curiosity kept me going — I wanted to see the top.

Suddenly, there it was! The summit covered just a few dozen square metres, at the centre of which was a newly built three-storey Guanyin (Bodhisattva) Hall. A young nun was walking around the hall tipping the prayer wheels. Exhausted from my journey, I went in. Looking up, I saw the solemn and splendid Guanyin statue. Feeling wonderfully free of all worldly cares, and having just survived a rather harrowing ascent, I quickly kneeled and kowtowed. No wonder people are apt to feel the call of the Buddha during times of hardship and difficulty.

Back outside, I cast my eyes over the danxia landscape of Kanbula, grateful for the cool wind pouring over me. Nanzong Nunnery in the valley, Nanzong Zha Monastery, and the deep green primitive forests beyond spread out before me. The view could not help but steady one's thoughts and broaden one's mind. Practising Buddhism in such a place would surely be of help in attaining the lofty realms that most of us will never reach.

Karmic Encounter

Before nightfall, I returned to Hengmao's house. I told her I had climbed to Aqiong Nanzong Monastery alone. She stared at me, saying my visit to the monastery had been karmic and would be seen as a good deed towards my next life. It was, she said, a chance for me to think about hardships on the road. After dinner, in the dim light, Hengmao held my hand in one of hers, a string of beads in the other. Looking into my eyes, she said with all seriousness that our meeting had been fate and as such, looking at one another was a pleasure. She was so kind and her words so earnest that it was easy to believe it was indeed a karmic encounter fixed in our previous lives.

and an amazing geological landscape. Looking north from Dehong Village at Shenbao Mountain, we saw an array of odd peaks at the edge of the forests, like castles piercing the mist and clouds. This Kanbula danxi terrain is the largest of its kind in the Yellow River drainage area. The peaks, taking all sorts of interesting shapes and formed of sandstone of the tertiary red layer, have undergone numerous geological changes over the millennia. The peaks have been at the mercy of eons of natural elements — wind, snow, rain and brutal sunshine. And as if to add a final charming touch, the Yellow River wears and washes away at the peaks, working like a patient sculptor.

Nanzong Valley — Home of the Tibetan Buddhism Renaissance

Covering a mere seven kilometres, Nanzong Valley overflows with cultural significance. Danxia peaks and dense forests line either side of the valley, which is the core section of both the National Geology Park and the National Forest Park. Sacred Nanzong Peak lies to the west. Three famous religious sites — Nanzong Nunnery, Aqing Nanzhou Monastery and Sang'adeji Monastery — can be found to the east. Of different sects and practitioners, they co-exist along with the Yellow Sect (Gelukpa) and the Red Sect (Nyingmapa) alongside both monks and nuns. Nanzong Peak is referred to as the sacred place of the "second dissemination" of Tibetan Buddhism.

Nanzong Nunnery — Spiritual Home for Women

More than 150 nuns live in Nanzhong Nunnery. A Bhiksuni Monastery of the Nyingmapa, it is the largest nunnery in Northwest China. The nunnery operates along strict precepts. For example, the nuns may not leave the nunnery without permission; they may not communicate with the monks of Sang'adeji Monastery except during joint ritual performances; they may not stay overnight outside the nunnery unless they are making a trip home.

Back in 1958, the nuns were dispersed under the national unrest that started that year, but the nunnery was re-opened in 1978. The former abbot is 87 and will live out the rest of her life in the nunnery. The oldest nun is now 42, the youngest is nine. They all joined of their own free will. For some, their allegiance was pledged on recovery from an illness or the redemption of a vow. Contrary to the more common reasons that women become nuns, they were not runaway brides, lonely-hearts or those seeking an end to personal suffering via denouncement of the world. These women became nuns to seek a spiritual home. Though they are free to return to the world at any time, not one has given up her place over the centuries. All live the kind of austere life that might be expected of those engaged in worn-papered sutra chanting by a dim yellow light.

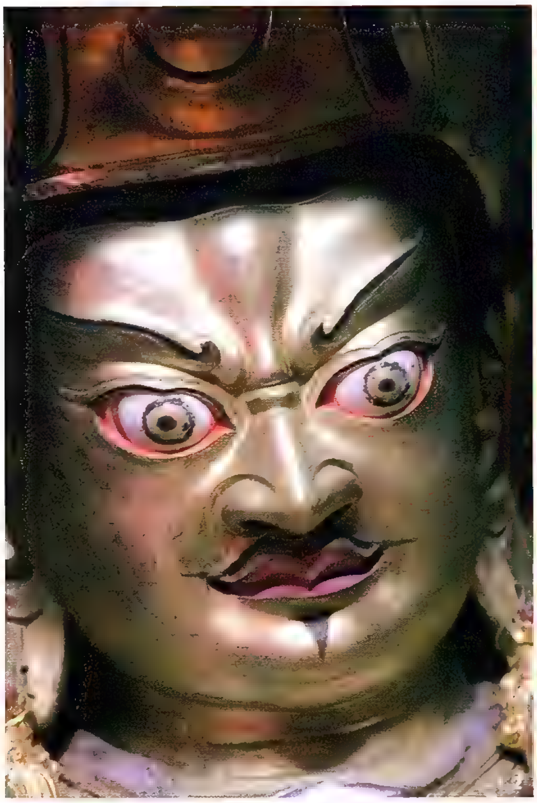
1. Reddish danxia terrain around Lijia Gorge reservoir.

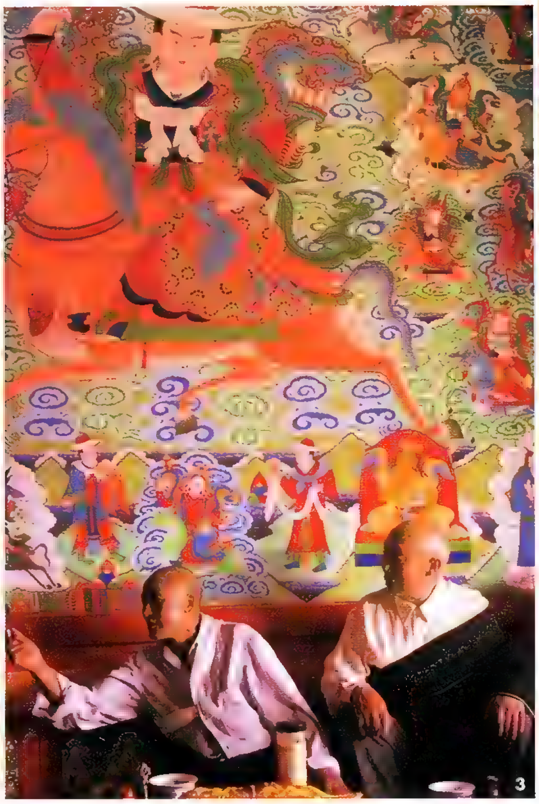
2. Guanyin Hall perches high atop Aqiong Nanzong Peak.

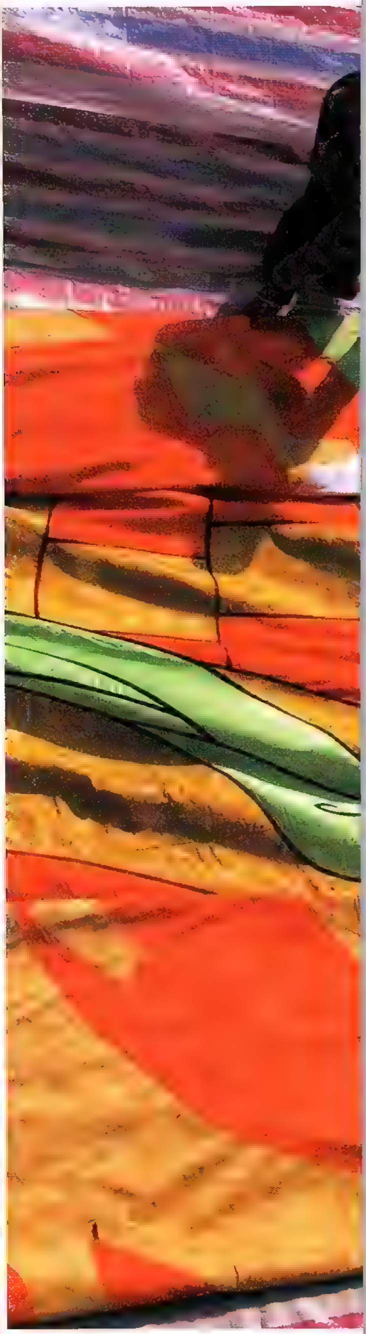
2

Regong Art

A Gem of Tibetan Culture







1. A branch of the Yellow River, the Longwu River passes through the centre of Tongren County, the Regong, which in Chinese means "a golden valley where dreams come true".

2. Buddhist sculptures are the cream of Regong art.

3. A mural in a local monastery.

4. A huge embroidered applique image of the Buddha made for the Shoton Festival (Sunning the Buddha).

Landscape of the Longwu Gorge

Twenty kilometres southeast of Jainca County, the 156-km-long Longwu River converges with the Yellow River. In Tibetan, Longwu means "a river of nine rivers". The Longwu is wonderfully free of pollution and its torrential current has carved a deep gorge and helped shape the precipitous cliffs. Beyond the gorge, a smooth expanse of fields stretches far between the mountains, on which ancient temples and pagodas stand amid the trees. This is Tongren County, capital of the Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. In Tibetan, Tongren is pronounced Regong and means "a golden valley where dreams come true". The county seat is in Longwu Town. Thirteen ethnic groups live here, including the Tibetan, Han, Tu, Hui, Sala, Mogolian and Bao'an, with the Tibetans making up the majority of the 70,000 residents.

4

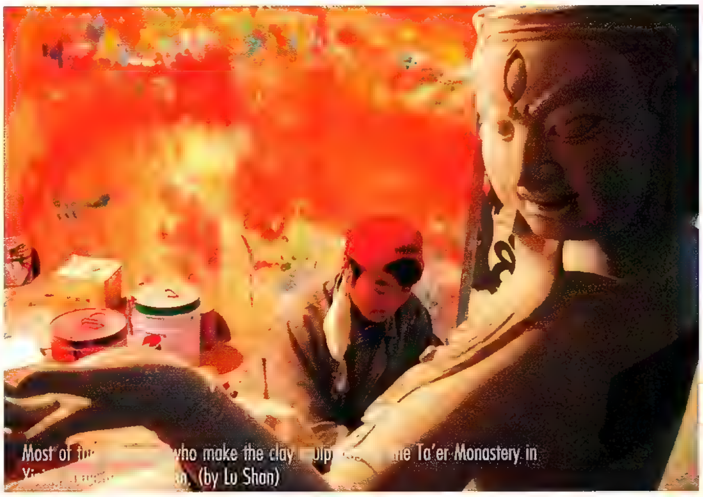
From Wutun to Regong Art

Regong art, the cream of Longwu River Valley culture, encompasses 10 art forms including Tangka, mural painting, padded-satin applique, clay, wood and stone sculpture, dough modelling, brick carving, and Tibetan opera. Of these, they particularly excel in Tangka and mural painting, padded-satin applique, sculpture and the Tibetan opera.

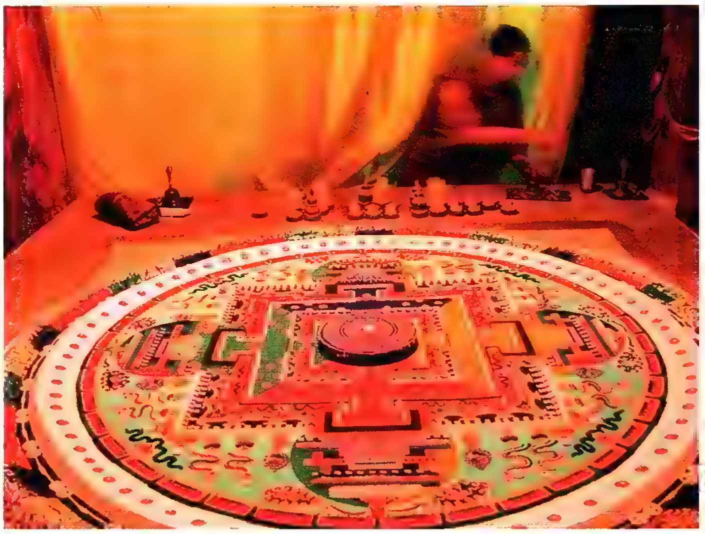
Though Regong art has been around for a thousand years, the name didn't come into being until a few decades ago. Previously, it was dubbed Wutun Art by Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong (1711—1799). When then-Secretary General of the Communist Party of China Hu Yaobang (1915—1989) visited Huangnan in the 1980s on an inspection tour, he spoke highly of the folk art at Wutun. Local officials asked him to grant the unique art a fitting name. Hu suggest Regong Art and promised to write the inscription for the Regong Art Museum of China that was being built.

According to records, Regong art was around before the Yuan Dynasty (1279—1368). During the Tang Dynasty (618—907), Sengge Mangra studied painting in Nepal. After graduating, he returned to Lhasa to paint and sculpt for monasteries. Later during a visit to his grandfather who was a serviceman in Tongren, he taught art there. Under his guidance, a group of artists emerged. In some of the nearby villages, including Wutun, Regong art began to develop. The artwork became very popular and eventually almost everyone in the area could paint. Their skills continue to be passed down to this day.

Sengge Mangra settled down in Regong as a teacher and never returned to Tibet. His son Siggon followed in his father's footsteps and married a Han woman named Zhang. The couple had eight sons. Today, the painters at Wutun quite frankly refer to themselves as Tibetans with some Han blood.



Most of [illegible] who make the clay [illegible] the Ta'er Monastery in [illegible]n. (by Lu Shan)



A Mandala of fine colourful sand will normally be dispersed after a Buddhist service. (by Lu Shan)

My Perception of Regong Art

[illegible]

Returning from Nanzong Monastery to the Tongren County seat, capital of the Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, I went to the Regong Art Gallery to meet Jamyang, a painter introduced by a friend. Dressed in a red lama robe, he was a monk of the Yellow Sect of Lamaism.

Jamyang invited me to his home, the first floor of a house behind the art gallery. Formerly a spacious showroom, it now houses his bedroom, studio and kitchen. The shy boy painting at an easel was his younger brother Sogyal, who is also his apprentice. They kindly invited me to stay, but I felt a little uneasy about staying overnight in the same room with two men. Jamyang said that all their visiting friends stayed with them, as it made it more convenient to talk and they saved money. Sizing up the big 50-square metre room, I agreed.

My trip was becoming very interesting, first staying with nuns and then living in a monk's house.

Truth in the Mandala

After setting down my luggage, I went with Jamyang to the Huangnan Regong Art Gallery.

The exhibits include modern and contemporary works by noted Regong artists — Tangkas, padded-satin applique, coloured butter sculptures, woodcarvings...all meticulously produced and stunning in their bright colours and superior workmanship. But the Mandala sand painting in the shape of a vajra, or diamond wheel, amazed me the most.

According to historical documents, the Mandala dates back some 2,500 years in India, where it was introduced from Tibet in the 11th century after having been developed in Tongren in Qinghai. According to Jamyang, the coloured sand is made from white stones that are ground into a kind of silver sand. This is then dyed in some 14 colours, including white, black, red, blue, yellow, green and the deep, medium and light tones of the last four colours. White, red, blue, yellow and green represent the Five Wisdom Buddhas of the five regions. Mandala used to be made roughly by hand. Then the master monk of Jokhang Monastery in Lhasa invented a special long funnel that allows monks to work freely on the altar with the coloured sand. Jamyang showed me how to produce thin lines of sand with the funnel, an amazing and useful tool.

For all the care that goes into creating a Mandala, the main reason for making one is to disassemble it again. Buddhists believe that everything comes together because of certain karma or a predestined relationship. It falls apart again when the karma disintegrates, and this is known as 'impermanence'. Normally, a Mandala will be taken apart in an orderly manner and put into precious bottles to be released into running water that flows throughout the land. The circulating water can then empower and purify all living creatures and their environment. In Buddhism this dispersal is meant to remind people not to cling to anything too much. We should accept that life changes constantly and nothing is permanent, just like the look of the magnificent and solemn Mandala shown by the Amita, or Buddha of the Boundless Light — it is like a moon reflected in water that may disappear at any time. So the best way to preserve the Mandala is to disperse it.

Beautiful yet fragile, a Mandala is difficult to build but easy to break down — a reflection of the transient nature of man's world. In the face of an ever-changing reality suffused with all kinds of troubles and transience, we should have the heart to receive everything with peace of mind and compassion after seeing the truth revealed by the Mandala.

Tangka Master of Lower Wutun Monastery

On the third day, Sogyal and I visited the Upper and Lower Wutun Monasteries, both well-known for their Regong artwork. The most exquisite murals were those in the grand hall of the Upper Wutun Monastery, where the late master painter and monk Shawu Tsering served. He followed the great artist Zhang Daqian in copying murals from the grottoes at Dunhuang. Regarded highly by his mentor, he became widely known throughout the country.

Songyeky in his 20s with large dark eyes is very skilled at line drawing.

The Upper and Lower Wutun Monasteries are separated by a highway. The latter appears older and is filled with large colourful Tangkas, dizzying in their brightness. We met Sangyeky, a friend of Sogyal's. In his 20s with large dark eyes, he is very skilled at line drawing. He invited us to his house.

Sangyekya's work was astonishing. He showed us a brilliant, metre-tall painting; the auspicious rays spreading out from the Buddha at the centre were particularly fine, the neat, thin brushstrokes long, refined and flowing. Even more amazingly, he could paint complicated dragon, phoenix and flower patterns on clothing using only a single hair of his brush. Many of his works involved a great number of figures no more than three cm tall, making them genuine miniature artworks.

A Simple Life in a Spiritually Rich World

That night, I dreaded returning to materialistic city life. So I asked Jamyang if monks ever have to deal with stress and what made him happy. Sitting back against a pillow, he replied quietly that normally nothing upsets him. His only garment is his monk's robe, three of which are enough to keep him clothed for a year. Bread and butter can suffice for his meals, so long as there is enough to eat. He said he felt happiest when chatting with friends — he could go on talking and never feel the need for sleep.

Such a life is really admirable. I told him I was not as simple in my wants and needs, for I liked to dress smartly and eat all kinds of delicious foods. I like spending time with friends, too, but I have many desires and cling to my likes and dislikes without being able, or willing, to change. Life is an agony, as Sakyamuni said, and the source of agony lies in desire. One has to restrain one's desire to be free from agony. But how could I do this?

After a silence, Jamyang replied: "Although you live more comfortably in the city, and we Tibetans have a harder life in comparison, we have faith that we can possibly attain Buddha-hood after prolonged cultivation." I felt touched by, and even somewhat envious, of his devotion to his faith. But it seemed beyond my reach. By living with a simple outlook in such a rich and colourful spiritual world, the people here seemed to have so much.

My flight left the Qinghai Plateau just before dawn as scheduled. Before boarding, I sent a message to a friend in the city: I felt so sad to leave this secluded world that tears welled up in my eyes.

Translated by L. Yu

Ancient Monasteries of Huangnan

In Regong (or Tongren), at least 90 percent of the population, including Tibetans, Mongolians and the Tujia, follow Tibetan Buddhism. In the Tongren area, monasteries are usually built in the villages from which they take their names. This arrangement, along with a family shrine in each house, creates a strong bond between the monastery and the villagers. Today, some 40 monasteries still function in the Regong area. The Bon (Black Sect), Gelugpa (Yellow Sect) and Nyingmapa (Red Sect) all co-exist peacefully, and each Tibetan Buddhist monastery is a virtual museum of Regong masterpieces.

1. The footprints of worshippers over the years leave impressions on the wooden floorboards.

2. Longwu Monastery, the largest Buddhist monastery in Huangnan Prefecture, houses a large collection of Regong masterpieces from the Ming Dynasty.

3. Monks in Longwu Monastery at the morning session.

Longwu Monastery — Museum and College

Built in 1301, or the fifth year of the Dade Reign of the Yuan Dynasty (1271—1368), Longwu Monastery eventually became the top monastery in Amdo. At one time it had 35 subordinate monasteries. The famous Labrang Monastery, currently in Gansu Province, was built and run by monks from Longwu Monastery. The profound and all-inclusive Buddhist dharma is believed and revered by people all over the world.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were no schools in Tongren. Longwu Monastery shouldered the responsibility of providing education. As a monastery and a school, it adhered to the prajna of showing compassion to sentient beings and accepted as many children as possible. Courses included sutra, modern science, and the arts. The 35 subordinate monasteries were in fact 35 schools. It became the education centre of the Tibetan area of Qinghai.

Longwu Monastery also propagates science and technology. The monastery has made great achievements in both Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism. It also makes considerable contributions to medicine and astronomy. Every morning, the daily weather forecast is pasted on the front of the monastery. It's the first thing the locals want to know each day, so they may arrange their agricultural and husbandry affairs accordingly. The elderly residents claimed the weather forecast had a high percentage of accuracy and was considered an oracle.

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Time-honoured Upper and Lower Wudun Monasteries

Wudun Monastery is more than a thousand years old. Lower Wudun Monastery features the natural mix of village and monastery, laymen and monks. This is typical of other monasteries in the Regong area. Newborn babies are also registered at the monastery. At the age of seven to eight, they go to the monastery to learn about sutra, painting and sculpture. The monks follow the Chan School (Zen Sect) in their religious practice.

The Main Sutra Hall, Maitreya Hall and Tsongkhapa (founder of the Yellow Hat Sect) Hall, as well as the newly built Guanyin (Bodhisattva) Hall and Kalachakra (time wheel) Stupa are all places of interest in Lower Wudun Monastery. In particular, the 11-metre Maitreya Buddha is artistic perfection.

Upper Wudun Monastery, meanwhile, is known for its paintings. The murals and Tangka in the Maitreya Hall are rare gems. The Sakyamuni statue in the hall of the

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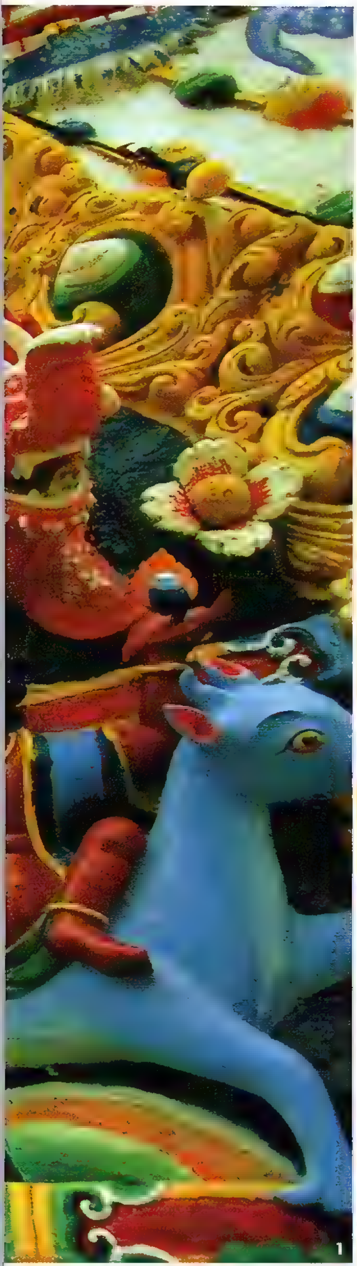
same name is a classic artwork by Luosang Nima. What makes it even more amazing is that it is said to contain three strands of Sakyamuni's hair, the tooth of Master Faxian and the holy remains of Tsongkhapa. The wood sculpture of the Maitreya Buddha, which stands one metre high, dates back 800 years. The artists carved the statue from one solid piece of sandalwood. All these centuries later, it still imparts a light, if elusive, scent. The two brick carvings on the pillars outside the gate of the Main Sutra Hall feature the double-happiness design, a favourite of Chinese carvers. These works bestowed good wishes on the founding of the monastery.

Nianduhu Monastery's Rare Religious Treasure

Just a kilometre away from the seat of Tongren County in the northwest, Nianduhu Monastery, one of the subordinate monasteries of Longwu Monastery. In addition to the large-scale barbola mural considered the best in the area, the monastery houses a collection of rare cultural relics. It was erected at the end of the Ming Dynasty, on the first day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar in the 28th year of the Wangli Reign (1601). The Tsongkhapa Hall is on the upper floor of the Main Sutra Hall. Inside, a statue of Yellow Sect founder Tsongkhapa sits front and centre. The statue reflects the superior sculpting and gilding techniques and skills of the artists that crafted it. One thousand smaller statues of Tsongkhapa sit either side of it. They, too, are delicately wrought. Fittingly, statues of the high lamas form the Upstairs Thousand Buddha Hall.

Guomari Monastery and the First Stupa in Amdo

Guomari Monastery is located in Guomari Village of Niandu Township, five kilometres from the Tongren



1. The First Stupa of Amdo at Guomari Monastery.

2. The former home of Gedun Chopel.

3 .Gedun Chopel is called "the Voltaire of Tibetology".

County seat. Built during the Wangli Reign of the Ming Dynasty, the monastery consists of a Maitreya Hall, Mandala Hall, Kalachakra Stupa and Guomari ruins city. Inside the hall stands a life-size carved wooden statue of the Buddha, its lively gestures and features capturing the spirit of the here and now. The figure's arms possess the natural sheen and physical resilience of real human tissue and muscle. The silky costume adds to the sense of reality. Most of the monasteryes novice monks and the villagers learn carving and sculpting. They use birch wood for the Buddha statues and woodblocks to print religious paintings and sutras. The Buddha Hall was rebuilt in 1992, yet the old paintings of the 18th century were still embedded on the vault of the monastery. In the paintings, the 32 mandalas in Shambhala, the Land of the Buddha, are revealed beautifully. This particular theme is seldom addressed among the mandala, and the paintings are highly valued for both religious research and artistic appreciation.

The Kalachakra Stupa, known as the First Stupa in Amdo, rises 38 metres within a unique structure. It is the top stupa in Amdo. The entire Kalachakra Sutra is inscribed in Sanskrit on the surface of the stupa from the bottom to the top. The cassocks, clothes and daily utensils of the 10th Panchen Erteni Choskyi Rgyalmtshan, as well as five million clay statues of the Buddha of all different sizes, are housed within. The locals refer to it as the Million Buddha Stupa. It stands five storeys, with the first and the third storeys working as the seats and the second and fourth storeys reserved for Buddha statues. Eight major Bodhisattvas are carved on the exterior of the second storey, with four other buddhas inside. On the fourth storey, 32 chiefs (or 32 kings) of the Land of Buddha Shambhala are carved. The carvings depict a heavenly and otherwise invisible world. The hall on the fifth storey is in the shape of a treasure bottle. The delicate scent of the sandalwood Kalachakra permeates the space.

Gedun Chopel — Exceptional Buddhist Monk

Tongren is known first for its many monasteries and then for the high lama Gedu Chopel (1905-1951). Gedun Chopel has been honoured with the titles

"Exceptional Buddhist Monk of the 20th Century" and "the Voltaire of Tibetology". Living at a time of great societal transition, he was courageous enough to seek a broader world perspective from a higher standpoint. Unwilling to keep to the usual confinements of the monastery and the Tibetans as his peers did, he embarked on a wandering study that took him to the subcontinent. His works — The White Annals, Notes to Madhyamika-sastra by Nagarjuna, Tibetan Arts of Love — and scores of other papers have gained the attention of overseas scholars. American Tibetologist Ellis Gene Smith (a founder of the Tibetan?Buddhist?Resource?Centre) began researching Gedun Chopel in the early 1960s. American scholar Jeffrey Hopkins and Dorje Yudon Yuthok, a Tibetan woman, translated Tibetan Arts of Love after conducting detailed research on the book. The Gedun Chopel Association was founded in France. French Tibetologist Heather Stoddard studied Gedun ChOpel for 10 years and penned the weighty monograph Le mendiant de l'Amdo (The Beggar from Amdo). Although Gedun Chopel was a talented, knowledgeable and accomplished individual, he was also a highly social man born at the wrong time. He lived a drifting life, loved by some, but smeared by others. Poverty and sickness followed him like shadows until he died at 49, in misery.

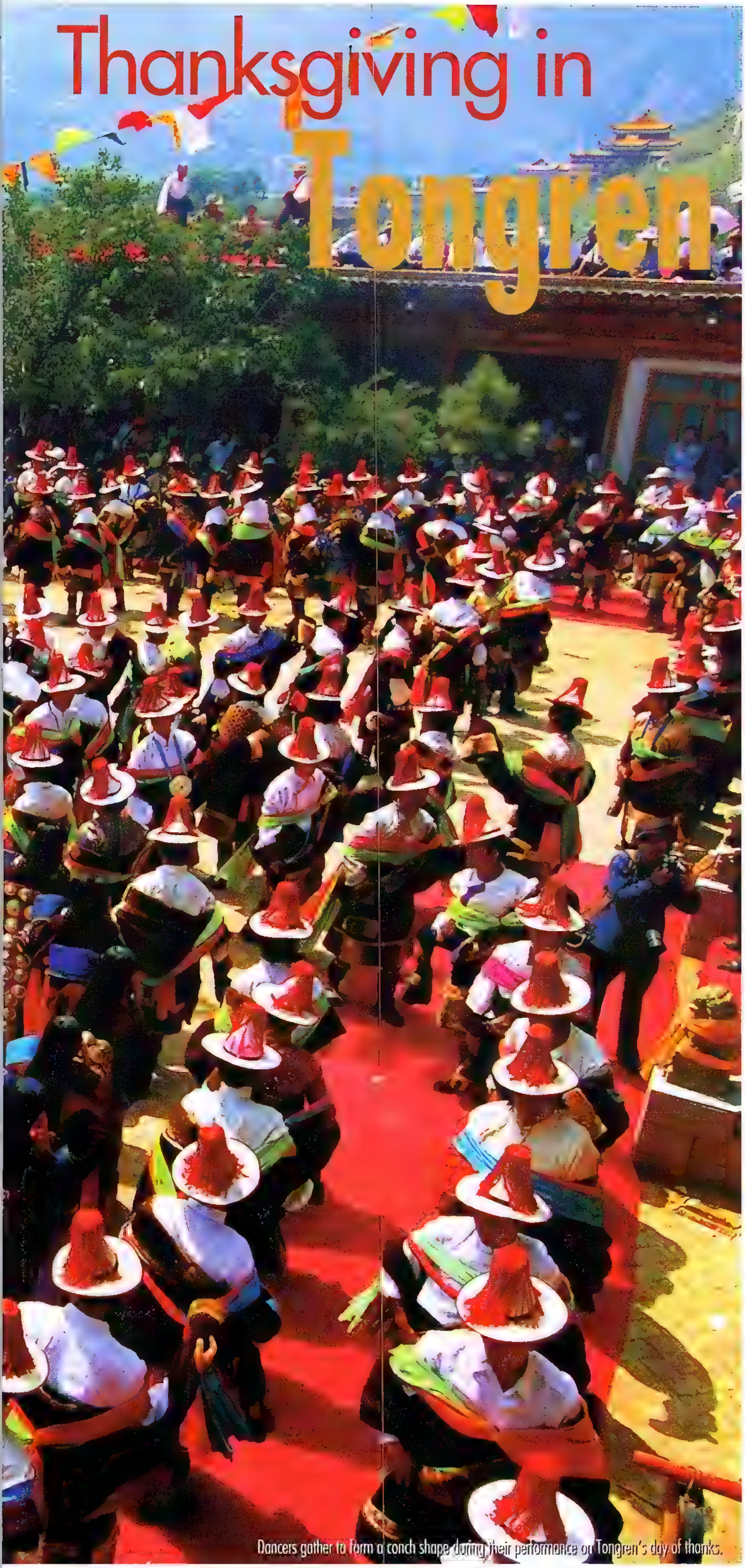
Translated by Zhang Boli

1. Guolaka Monastery is the largest Red Sect monastery in Huangnan Prefecture.

2. The Living Buddha and lamas of Heri Monastery welcome visitors.

3. Cattle released outside Heri Monastery in Kuze County. As they are a living sacrifice to the Buddha and exempt from slaughter, they will be allowed to graze until they die naturally.

Thanksgiving in Tongren



Dancers gather to form a conch shape during their performance on Tongren's day of thanks.

The sixth lunar month means joyful celebrations in the Tongren area. The crops flourish, promising a great harvest. The locals believe this is due to the favour and protection they receive from the deities. Along with the strong beliefs of the primitive Bon religious sect that worships mountain and water gods, the local people make use of their free time just before the harvest to engage in activities that worship, compensate and, ultimately, please the deities. These rituals have passed from generation to generation to develop into a grand festival. Known as the Holy Dances in June, the festival is also called Ladun by the Tu ethnic group, a name that suggests entertainment. The major programmes all involve dancing, although more subdued lovers' activities also take place in the evenings.

From the 16th to the 25th of the sixth lunar month, residents of more than 20 villages along the Longwu River indulge themselves in waves of boisterous and sometimes strenuous celebrations that include blood sacrifices.

Dances for Mountain Deities

The entire religious festival is dedicated to the mountain gods. During the festival, both meat and vegetable offerings are presented, dances are performed, and blood rituals such as "cha qian" (插釺 thin metal rods piercing the cheeks), "bei qian" (背釺 rods in the backs) and "kai hong shan" (開紅山 incisions made in the forehead) are endured to ensure the security of families, the prosperity of livestock and a bountiful harvest. The deity that guards the village is given the best seat, of course. All the important mountain gods of the Amdo area are also invited to be worshiped and thanked, Erlangshen, Animaqing, Nianqin, Xiaqiong, Delong, Daerjia and Lari among them.

But these are just a few of the sacred guests of honour, for each village reveres many other spiritual guardians as well. And the attendant gods, ministers, generals, subordinates, spouses and children of all these deities are also invited to enjoy the merriment.

Lawa, a priest in the Tibetan tradition, refers to someone who can communicate with the gods. The priests in each village are not professional; they only appear at exorcisms. Most of the time, they work and farm as other villagers do, only taking on the priest role during the sixth lunar month celebrations. They receive no payment for their duties. Every village has at least one priest — though some have three or four — and each priest is said to have one fixed deity that can enter his body.

For the festival, a priest will wear his long hair in a twist, don a Tibetan-style robe and tie a red silk band around his waist. He will take part in almost

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constant dancing and the striking of the painted sheep-skin drums covered in such auspicious symbols as dragons, snakes, precious umbrellas, sutra-wheels, treasure bottles and holy animals. As he performs, a priest becomes one with the local guardian god, his body a mere vessel for the spirit. When this transformation occurs, the priest's eyes go slack, he shivers, foams at the mouth and mumbles to himself, his mind in a lunatic and extremely excited state.

This special priesthood is usually handed down through a single clan, but occasionally a person may be visited directly by a deity or may volunteer to be a priest by dedicating their lives to the gods after recovering from a serious illness or having survived a disaster. Still, one must win the trust of the villagers before he can become a priest, and this is not easily done. Some people have performed the dances and learned the invocations, but they haven't convinced the villagers of their divinity. The locals call them "false lawa". Only after being examined and approved by a prominent living buddha can anyone be recognized as a true lawa able to communicate with the gods.

A Bloody Ceremony

The most wonderful part of the exorcism rituals involve the "cha qian", "bei qian" and "kai hong shan" mentioned above. The practice permeates religious, dragon and military dances, as well as every ceremony that includes offerings to the gods. In every village that holds exorcisms, nearly all the males will have taken part in the blood sacrifices.

After leading the mass dancing for awhile, the priest will return to the temple, kowtow to images of the gods, recite the invocations and perform their ceremonies, praying to the gods for blessings and turning ordinary metal rods into divine instruments.

1. Young Tibetan girls in their festival dresses at the sixth lunar month celebrations.

2. Buddhists gather at a monastery to recite invocations together. (by Zheng Yunfeng)

3. Relatives present baskets of apples as gifts for a birthday feast. (by Zheng Yunfeng)

4."Weisang" is a necessary part of every exorcism ceremony. (by Zheng Yunfeng)

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When this last ritual begins, the worshippers become very excited. They surround the priest, asking him to thrust the thin metal rods through their cheeks and into their backs (in some villages, this activity is performed in a temple). The priest will then push the rods into the cheeks of the worshippers, usually one through each cheek. According to the older villagers, the rods symbolize two goats sacrificed to the gods; sometimes four sticks are inserted to help eradicate disease or illness or to pay the gods for their help in getting through a disaster. Everyone who sports the pierced cheeks smiles broadly, dancing and twirling around. In the group I observed, the oldest participant was about 30, the youngest four or five, but none of them seemed to feel any pain. After dancing for half an hour or so, the priest pulls the rods out again, one by one. Amazingly, they have never caused any infections or scarring or even blood flow! According to the local people, this is due to the divine qualities they are charged with at the time.

I asked a small child, "Do the rods hurt your cheeks?"

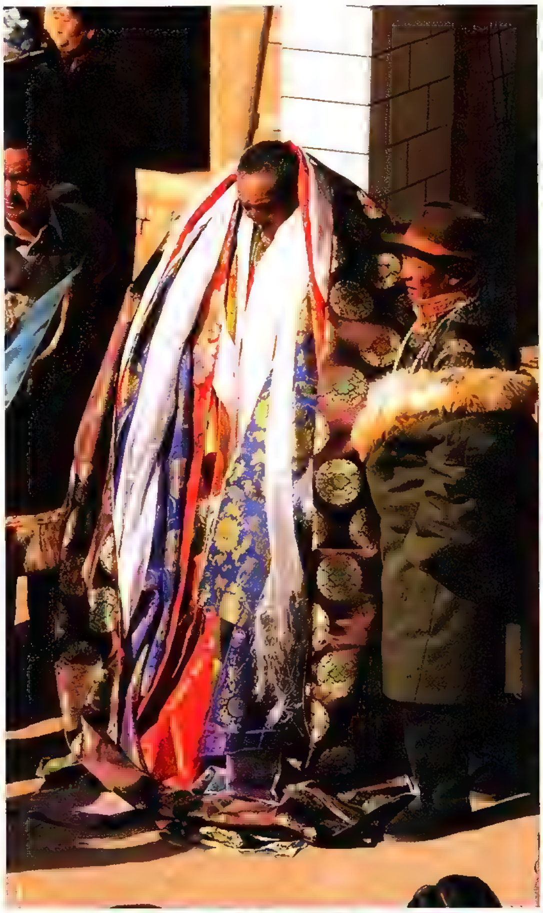
"Not at all," replied he.

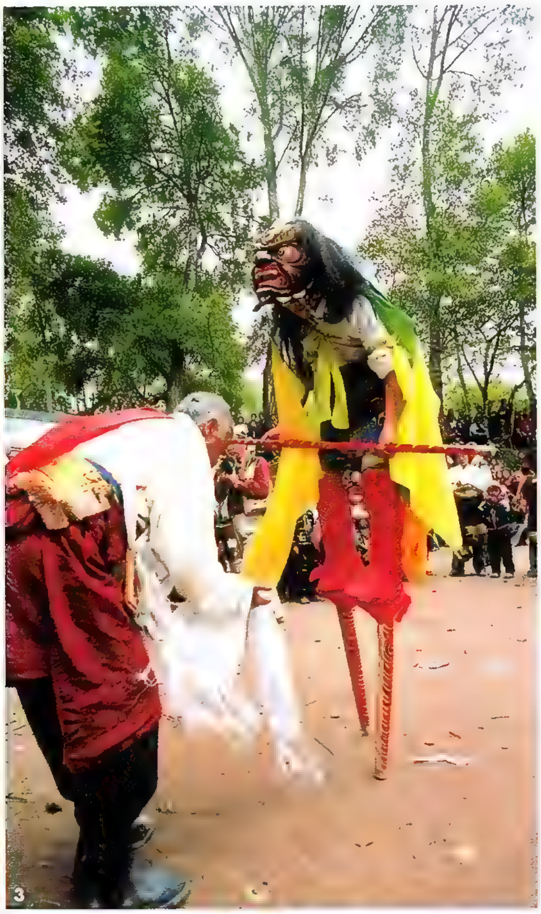
"Do you feel uneasy dancing with them sticking out of your face?"

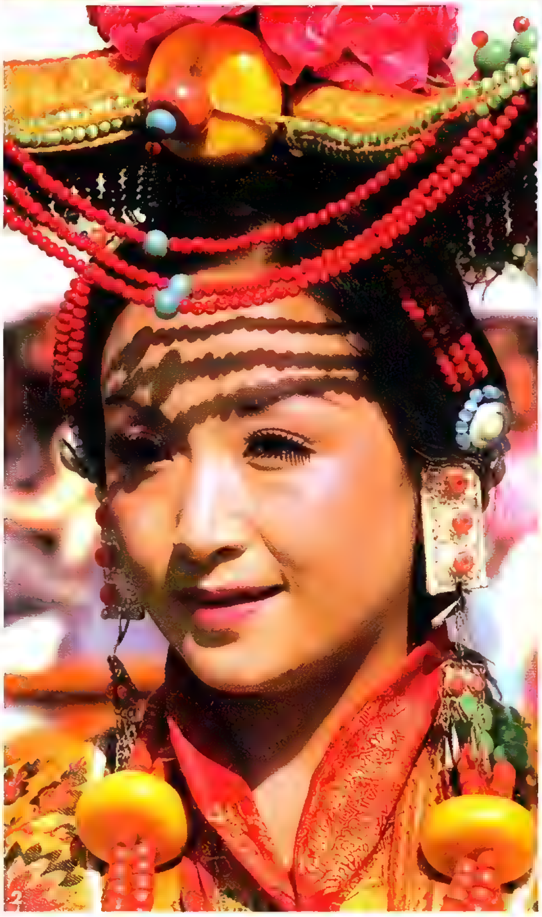
Again the child replied, "Not at all. I feel very happy."

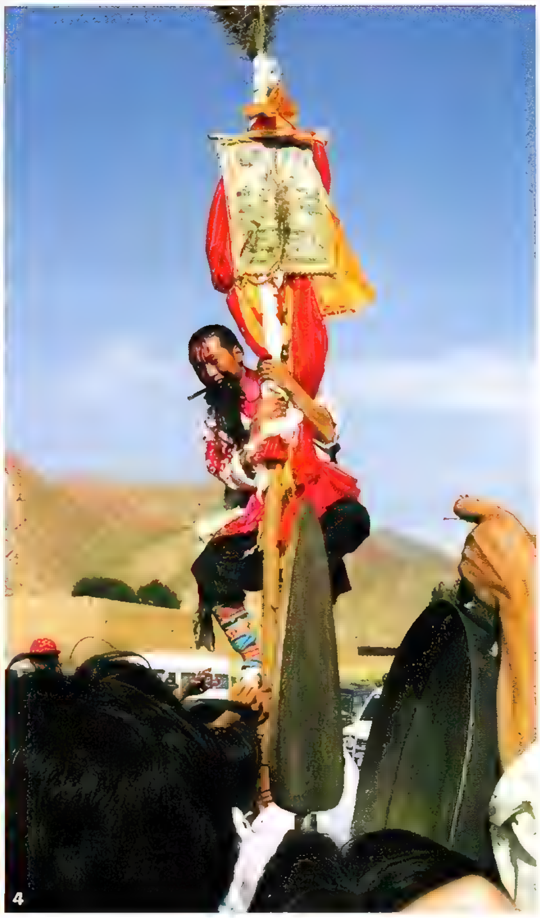
The rods are also used to pierce the skin on the back. A priest will insert 10-20 rods into the back of a volunteer, after which the volunteer will whirl and leap as much as he pleases until all the rods fall out again. Strangely, no bloodstains or scars are visible on the skin, as if they had not been penetrated at all.

"Kai hong shan" marks the climax of the exorcism dances and drives the gathering to its peak. With a knife clenched between his teeth, the priest climbs a pole from which the image of a god is









1. An old man draped in multicoloured hada, birthday gifts from his relatives and friends. (by Zheng Yunfeng)

2. Women attend the festivities in stunning full ceremonial dress.

3. This religious dance resembles the stilt performances of the Han. (by Zheng Yunfeng)

4. A "kai hong shan" ceremony, a rather rare occurrence.

5. Thin, metal rods penetrate cheeks and backs. Mysteriously, the skin does not bleed when the rods are pulled out.

6. Men with metal rods in their backs must keep dancing until all the rods fall out.

7. In the "kai hong shan" ritual, the forehead is cut until blood flows down the face.

hung. Then he cuts his own forehead with the knife. He begins to bleed immediately, red drops shining in the sunlight. The priest lets the blood flow over his face, onto his clothes and eventually down to the ground. He then strikes his forehead against the divine image on the pole, coating everything in red. This is the blood sacrifice, an activity that frightens tourists. Some are so scared they begin to cry, covering their eyes and not daring to look. But the priest just grins and carries on dancing wildly with the people until the bleeding finally stops, marking the end of the ceremony.

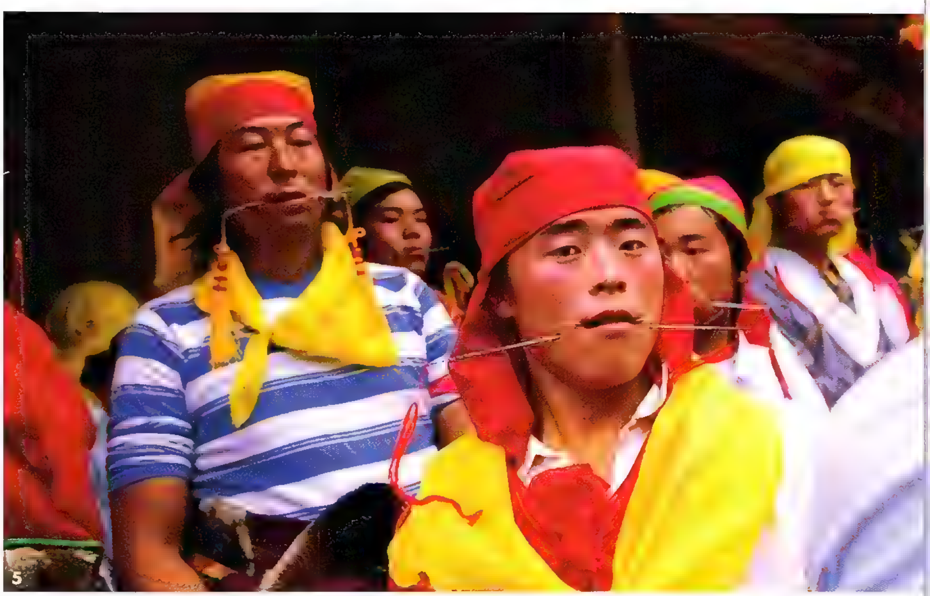
A Cleansing Ritual

I, too, was disturbed by the bloodletting, worried that such excessive bloodshed could damage the health. The Tibetan artist who accompanied me to the spectacle seemed to read my mind. He explained that he had also experienced "kai hong shan" and presented his brow for my inspection. I looked carefully but found no scars at the roots of his hair. He said the ceremony not only had no ill effects, but actually benefited the health. He cited himself as an example: "I submitted to it ("kai hong shan") when I was 51. Before then, I often suffered from regular headaches and dizziness, which even doctors could not cure. But after the ceremony, the problems stopped and they haven't recurred in the 10 years since then. I'm much stronger than before. I just wonder if the bleeding itself cured me or if it was a blessing from the gods. I am healthy, after all."

"But", I countered, "A priest goes through the 'kai hong shan' ritual every few years. Won't it shorten his lifespan?" As I asked the question, the artist smiled: "That old priest who presented the hada (a Tibetan white scarf) to you is 82. But he dances as wildly as the young people, doesn't he?" Watching the old priest's vigorous steps, I kept quiet. But I still wondered if the blood sacrifice was really good for the health.

On the final day of the festival, 68 people had their cheeks pierced and 48 had the rods inserted into the skin on their backs. More than 30 people participated in the hong shan, and upwards of 200 people danced, mostly young and middle-aged men who became heroes for their part in the dances and blood rituals.

The grand festival ended with dragon dances in the upper and lower Wutun villages. That evening, a bonfire was set alight in a square and the young people took part in some romantic activities and sang love songs. Then couples paired up, arms linked, and headed off to enjoy the beautiful evening alone together. During the June festivities, the evenings belong to lovers, and no one should disturb them.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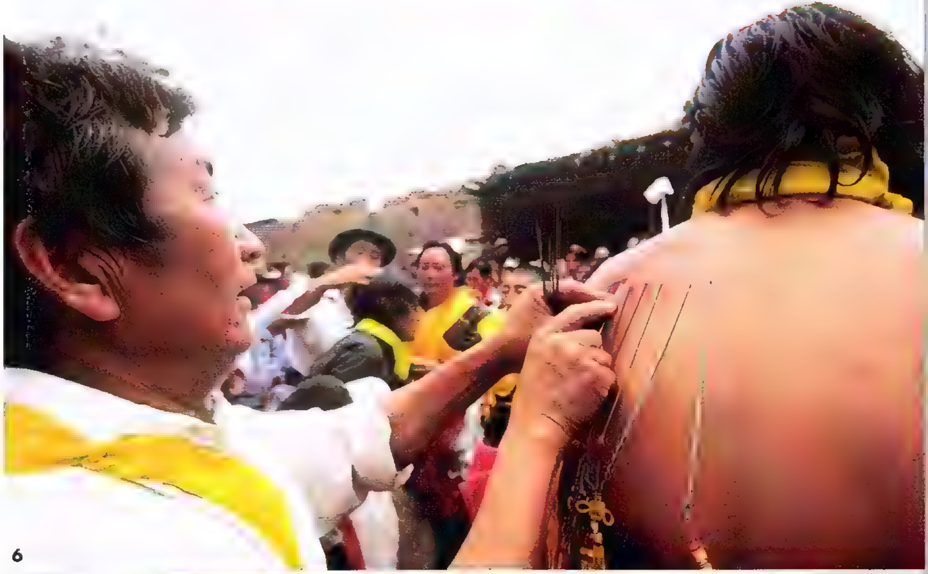
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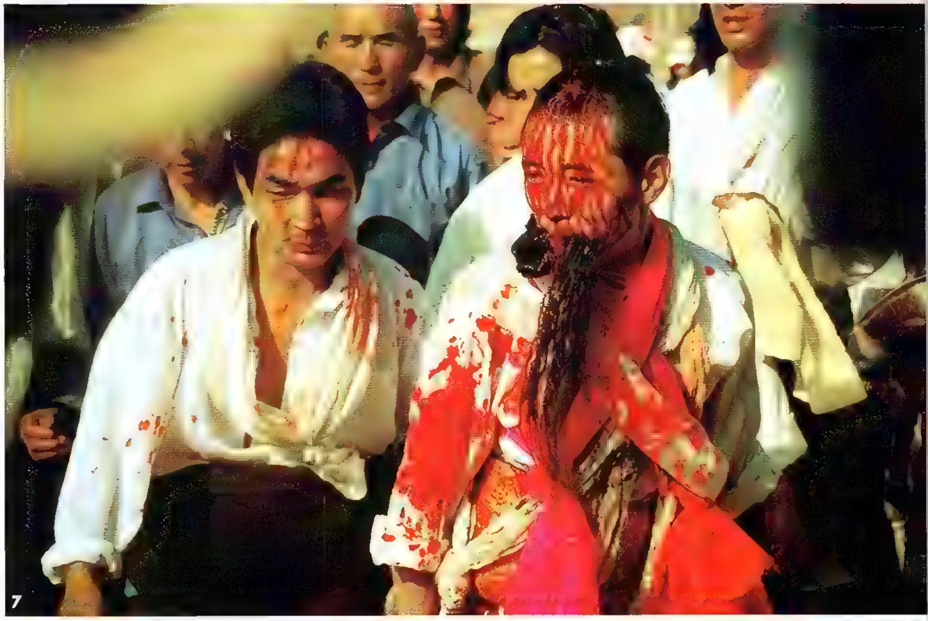
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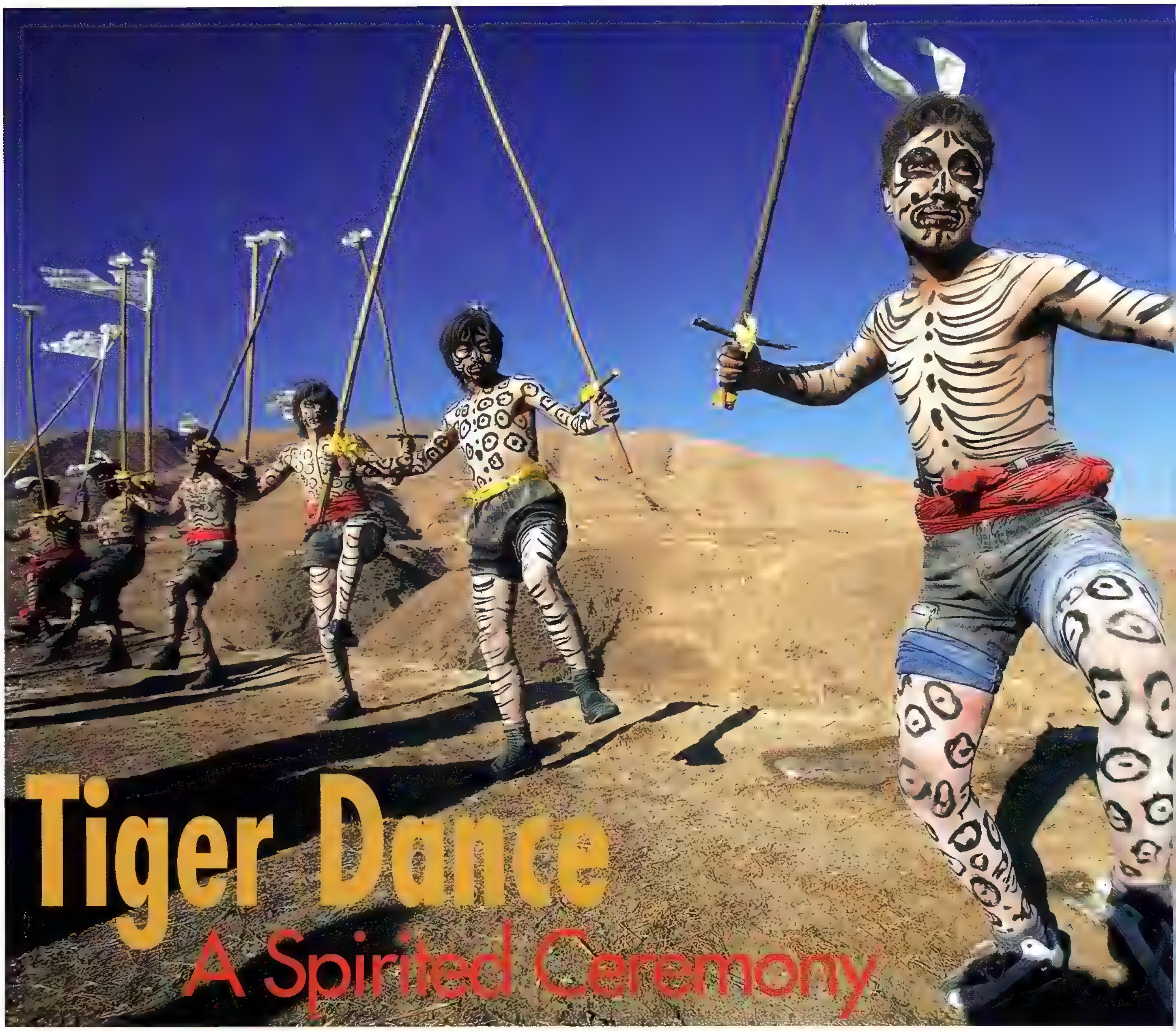


Tiger Dance

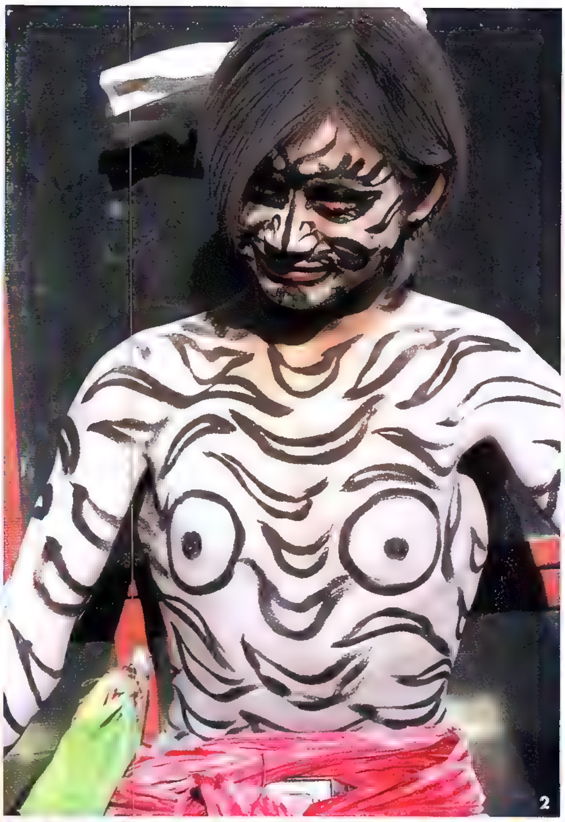
A Spirited Ceremony

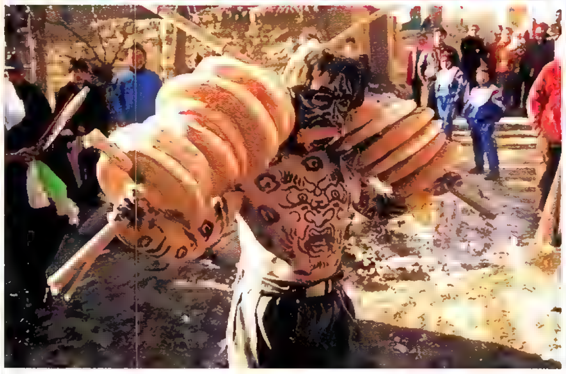
Said to eradicate illness and prevent natural disasters, the traditional "Wutu (old Chinese word for tiger) dance" goes back some 600 years in the Regong area. In the village of Nianduhu (which literally means "to eliminate disease and stave off disaster" in Tibetan) just two kilometres from the Tongren County seat, the Tiger Dance is performed every 11th lunar month.

Dancing the Demons Away

The Tu people believe the 20th day of the 11th lunar month is cursed, a dark day when demons roam the streets. They also believe wutus can keep bad things from happening and attract good luck. Just before noon, as the monastery bells rang out, seven young bare-chested lads stood patiently as two dressers from the village prepared them for their performance. First, ashes left over from exorcism fires were applied all over their faces and bodies, and even scattered into their hair. Then tiger stripes and leopard spots were painted on them with Chinese ink. They either sported tiger stripes on their upper bodies and leopard spots on their legs, or the reverse. The combination of these two fierce animals is said to increase the strength needed to conquer the demons. In each hand, the wutus held long poles topped with white strips of paper covered in devil-eliminating incantations. The young men also held large pieces of fresh meat (or sometimes tripe) in their mouths and hung a swollen piece of sheep intestine around their necks to complete their transformation into fierce wild animals.

The ceremony could now begin. The seven "tigers" knelt and quietly listened to the lawa. After a





1. The Tiger Dance is performed every 11th lunar month. (by Zheng Yunfeng)

2. Ashes are applied to the bodies of the "tigers", while their markings are painted on with Chinese ink. (by Zheng Yunfeng)

3. Every household presents the "tigers" with special cakes. (by Zheng Yunfeng)

4. Villagers must appease the wild animal spirits with food. (by Zheng Yunfeng)

5. After the ceremony, a "tiger" washes off in the river. (by Zheng Yunfeng)

prayer, the lawa left the worship hall and opened a bottle of alcohol. He presented it to both the heavenly gods and earthly deities as a kind of offering before letting each "tiger" drink several mouthfuls. From then on, the "tigers" no longer spoke because they had become divine animals bent on their mission of purging the bad and bringing good luck. After a time the "tigers" danced out of the monastery gate to the sounds of gongs and drums. They formed a circle and imitated tigers in their movements, dancing around an altar to exhibit their divine powers. Immediately after that, loud gunfire and firecrackers went off and the "tigers" dashed down a hill into the village. They then divided into two groups, climbing over walls into the courtyards of the residents' homes. All of the families left their houses, closing the gates tightly to trap the demons inside. They stood aside to let the "tigers" to catch and eat the evil spirits. As for those bedridden by illness, the "tigers" would stride over their bodies several times to help cure them. The wutu searched every corner of every household, leaving the demons with no place to hide. Then they entered the kitchens. Every household had prepared meat, fruit and milk-tea and other foods as offerings to the"tigers" to keep them strong during the ceremony.

When the ritual ended the young men did not return home immediately, for fear that they might bring bad luck to their families. Instead, they spent the night at a watermill outside the village or in a temple dedicated to Erlangshen, sharing the alcohol, meats and cakes that had been offered to them. They carried any leftovers back to the village the next day. On their way home, they handed out the auspicious food to anyone who asked and the recipients happily ate it. The Tiger Dance eliminates bad luck and strengthens relationships, leaving goodwill and happiness in its wake.

Prairie Games on the Plateau

A large expanse of the Henan Mongolian Autonomous County prairie sits more than 3,500 metres above sea level. But despite the strong winds, heavy snows and thin air prevalent through most of the year, the wildflowers of the hills and valleys flourish in the summer.

Going the Distance

In August, when the livestock is thriving and nature is in full bloom, the nomads of Tibet and Mongolia meet for their traditional sporting events. Horse and yak racing, stone-lifting, wrestling, tug-of-war and archery are all part of the games, but the locals particularly

1. Prairie races are held from the sixth to seventh month of the Chinese calendar in Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

2. The family of one participant have come to cheer him on.

enjoy the races.

The prairie has produced excellent horses since ancient times, thanks to centuries of work by the Qiang, Tuguhun, Tibetan and Mongolian people. All of the breeds — the Tibetan, Mongolian, Tang (in Longyou), Hanxue and Yili — are large and hearty and two riders easily, as well as run long distances, all at altitudes above 4,000 metres.

On the first day of the games, as the smoke of the "weisang" (ceremony of burning branches and incense) rises, the beating of gongs and drums and the call of the spiral-shaped trumpets attract crowds to the flower-strewn prairie. Everyone dresses up in their best and most colourful clothes, singing and laughing as they gather to watch the competitions.

Young men and boys make up the majority of the contestants, the youngest of whom are seven or eight. The horses do not sport leather saddles; instead riders sit on pieces of wool carpet. If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I would never have believed that such little children could ride bare-backed on these fast and powerful animals.

Riders put themselves through rigorous pre-race preparations. Several days before the contest, they bathe and recite incantations, and married competitors refrain from sleeping with their wives. Meanwhile, even the best horses must undergo special training. One month before the games, their feeding is restricted to help them reach a lower, ideal racing weight. The horses begin feeding in 100 square metre meadows, but the grazing area is gradually reduced to as little as 10 square metres as the competition approaches, to control the horses' appetites. This is also done to protect their health. Consuming too much food before a race can cause swelling of the abdomen, which can be highly dangerous or even deadly. Great pains are taken to ensure not only a good result, but also the animals' safety.

The preliminary, quarter-final and final race contests take place on two-to-three kilometre-long courses. The entire event's racing will generate one champion, two runners-up, two third-place winners and several fourth-place finishers. Tibetans and Mongolians excel at both riding and archery. With one to two hundred skilled competitors taking part, it's difficult to finish fourth, let alone become a champion. The spectators cheer on the top rider and his winning horse with dancing and a presentation of hada. When a rider wins, his relatives and neighbours also share in the honour, and the hero is revered as highly as a Number One Scholar of ancient times.

Comic Relief

The yak races, by contrast, are a hilarious treat. Riders carefully adorn their yaks, placing red flowers and silk bunting on their horns and tails. When the starting gun is fired, these "boats of the plateau" put on a real show. Not nearly as obedient as the horses, they make a spectacle of themselves, prancing and kicking in a confused jumble. Some run backwards, some stay rooted to the spot, refusing to move, and some even start munching the grass, oblivious to their masters' bidding. A few even head for the spectators, scattering the frightened crowd. Even the best herdsmen cannot control them. In the end, riders are thrown, saddles litter the ground and the yaks run amok. The first yak across the finish line wins, but this is usually down to pure luck rather than skill. Nobody really cares about winning, though. The important thing is entertaining the crowds and getting people laughing.

The Mongolians and Tibetans are both brave and fun-loving, characteristics that these people of the frozen plateau put on full display during this delightful event.

Translated by Huang Deyuan

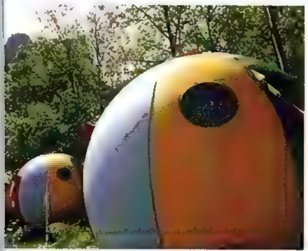
1. Young men who win have many female admirers.

2. The yak races provide comic entertainment.

3. Spectators scatter special wind-horse flags in the hopes that the gods will bless their competing relatives with a win during the horserace.

Tips for Travelling Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Xining Bus Terminal (by Ma Yiu Chun)



Guestroom shaped like a space capsule in the Komra Holiday Village

A store specialized in selling embroidered Tangkas

Fried dough twist

Transportation

Long-distance transportation

Neither Hong Kong nor Shenzhen has any direct flights to Xining. One can change flights in Guangzhou.

Guangzhou — Xining

Daily except Monday and Thursday, 8:20 ~ 11:10

Full price 1,630 yuan

Xining—Huangnan Prefecture

Take a bus from the Xining East Bus Terminal (on the Jianguo Road across the flyover opposite the Railway Station Square). About 10 scheduled buses run from there every day. Tel: (971) 814 9506

Xining—Lijiaxia (Komra)

About 10 buses are scheduled to run daily.

From the Tongren County to villages and monasteries

Taxi is available at the county town, pay negotiable from a starting price of 4 yuan.

Accommodation

Small family hostels are available in many villages, especially in Wutun, charging 30-50 yuan a day including board and room. For an alternative, hotels are as follows:

Regong Hotel

Add. Tuanjie Lu (Road), Rongwo Town

Standard room: About 200 yuan; Tel: (973) 872 2684

Huangnan Hotel

Add: Zhongshan Lu, Rongwo Town

Standard room: About 150 yuan; Tel: (973) 872 5655

New Century Hotel

Add: Zhongshan Lu

Standard room: About 120 yuan; Tel: (973) 872 6588

Huangnan Telecom Hotel

Add: Zhongshan Lu

Standard room: About 120 yuan; Tel: (973) 872 6888

Food and Drink

Rongwo Town in Tongren County, capital of the Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, offers a wide choice of food: local snacks of the Hui and Han flavours, Mongolian and Tibetan delicacies, and of course, Sichuan spicy dishes and hot pot which are found everywhere.

Mutton Eaten with Hands:

Sheep raised on the grassland of Huangnan Prefecture have unusually delicious meat with neither sheepy odor nor much fat. This dish of Mutton Eaten with Hands is available in Tibetan, Hui and Mongolian restaurants.

Yogurt:

Local yoghourt from the grassland is very thick with golden cream and snowwhite milk. It tastes mellower with some sugar.

Zanba:

Zanba is roasted qingke barley flour. It is usually taken in the shape of a ball by being mixed with buttered tea, butter, cheese and sugar. Some people may not be used to the taste of butter.

Buttered tea:

Add black tea to boiling fresh cow or ewe milk, together with some salt and butter, to make mellow and strong buttered tea. Butter can be omitted if you are not used to it.

Herdsmen's Snacks:

In addition to the common food and drink mentions above, nomadic herdsmen traveling in the wilds also have some special-flavoured food: Quick-boiled sausages — Five-kinds of sausages, each made by putting sheep blood, smashed mutton, paste and sheep oil, diced meat and sheep oil, smashed sheep liver into sheep intestines, respectively. Some visitors may not like their special tastes, but it might be fun just to have a try.

Besides the sausages, there is also grilled sheep liver, Tibetan bun, steamed pan cake, steamed rice with tender leaves of brakes, and Armillaria lulevirens — a kind of yellow mushroom growing on the prairie.

Shopping

Tangka:

Tangka comes first in the shopping list of visitors to Huangnan Prefecture. There are many kinds of Tangkas—big, medium and small ones. The big ones hang on scrolls, and the smaller ones can be palm-size. In terms of techniques, there are colour paintings and padded satin appliqué. Wooden Buddhist sculptures and Mani stones are also attractive. All these can be bought in shops in the Rongwo Town or in painters' homes in villages, and the latter way may be cheaper.

Armillaria lulevirens:

Never miss out on this kind of delicious yellow mushrooms growing on the prairie. The dry ones are easier to carry.

Time of Festivals

June Fair:

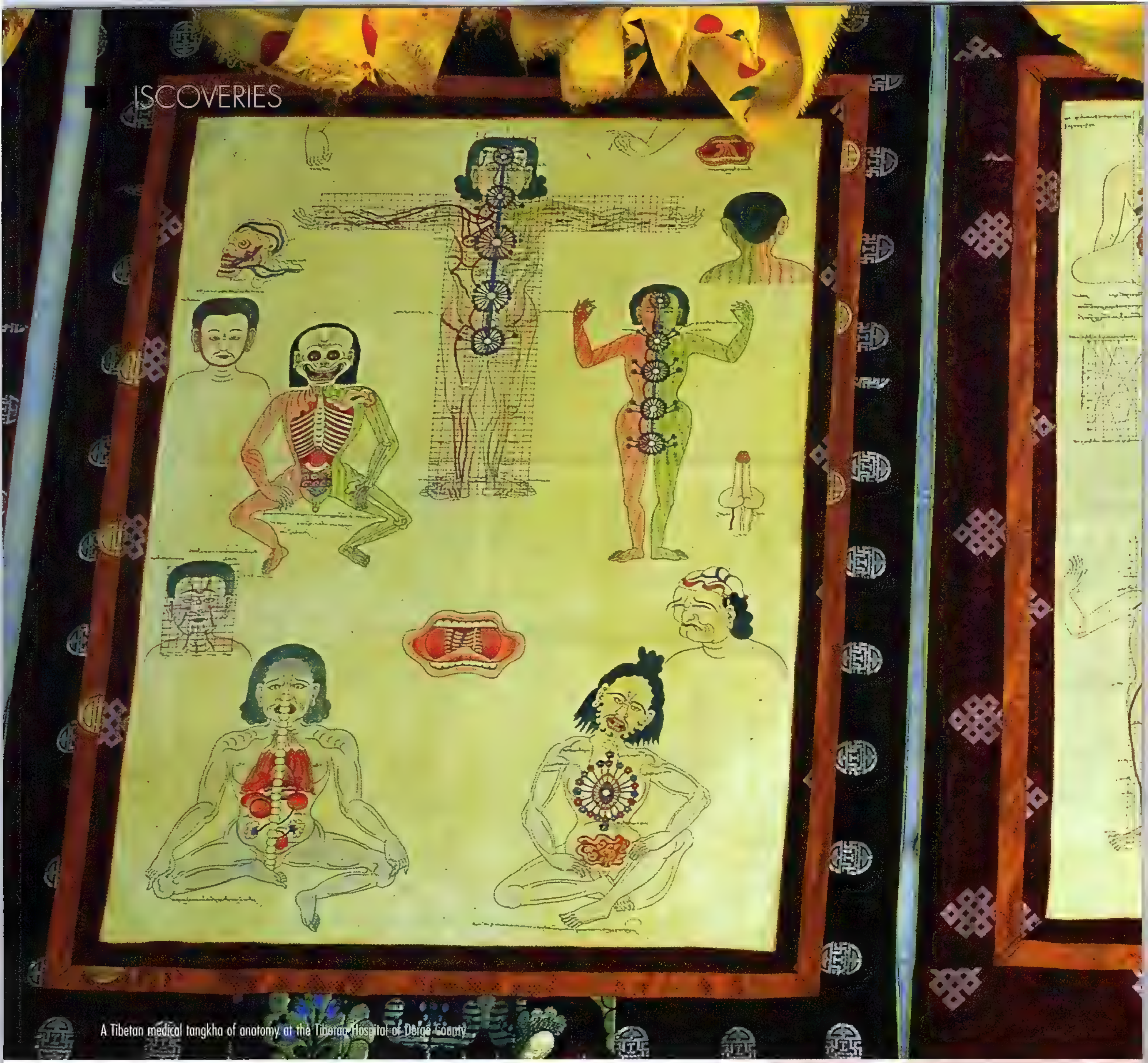
June Fairs are held in over 20 villages around the Tongren County Town from mid to late June of the lunar Chinese calendar:

Sikshi Tibetan Village — 16th to 18th
Nyanthok Tu Village — 18th to 24th
Gomargar Tu Village —19th to 23rd
Garsari Tu Village — 19th to 24th
Bao'an Mago Tibetan Village — 17th to 24th
Four Wutun Tibetan Villages —21st to 25th
Ranggyal Tibetan Village — 21st to 25th
Ridrag, Nangkhok Tibetan Villages — 20th to 24th
Sokru,Thewu Tibetan Villages — 20th to 25th
Yingdramo Tibetan Village — 2nd to 24th

Above is a rough schedule of the June Fair held every year, with some overlapping and mutual visits between villages.

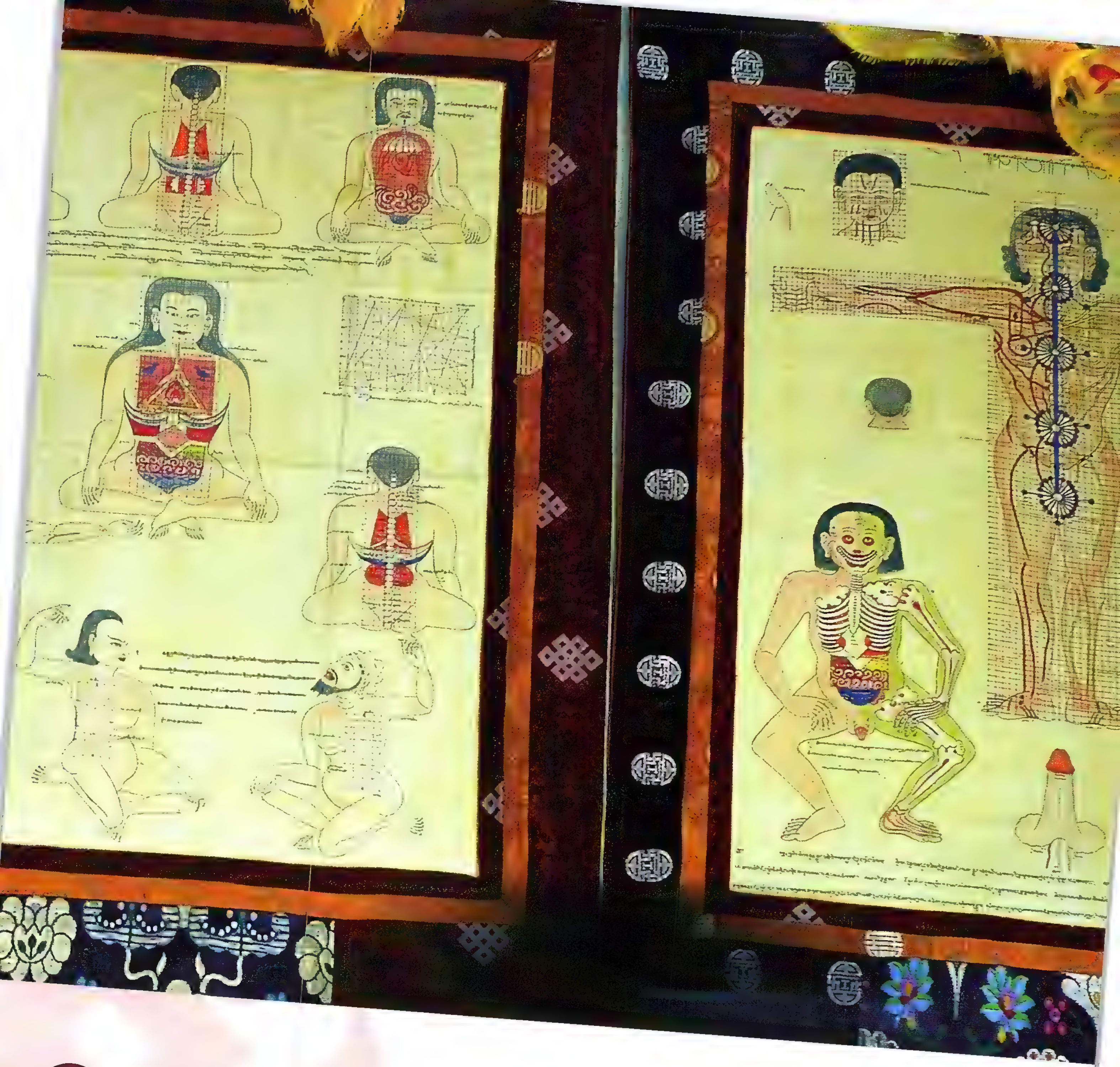
The Tiger Dance — This ancient dance is still held on the 20th of the 11th lunar month every winter in Nyanthok Tu Village.

[illegible] Railway Station (by [illegible]



A Tibetan medical tangkha of anatomy at the Tibetan Hospital of Dergê County

When I fell ill while visiting Dergê County in Southwest China's Sichuan Province back in 2003, a local friend suggested I see a Tibetan doctor. The folk doctor Tsultrim Gyatso, who formerly ran a practise from the Dergê Sutra-printing House, was in town seeing patients. In an old Tibetan shack behind the printing house, he took my pulse, asked for a urine sample and prescribed seven days' worth of medication, telling me to take one of the pills on Wednesday in the darkness before dawn but not in the presence of a woman. The time was chosen after a calculation was made based on my date of birth. I followed his instructions and, sure enough, my loose bowels were cured on the fourth day. By the seventh day, even my lumbago had disappeared. Since then, I have been fascinated by Tibetan medicine.



Getting to Know the
Tibetan Art of Healing

Photos & Article • Yu Qiong

Maisu, known as "herb valley", is located in southern Dergê County. The name, meaning "lost medicine" in Tibetan, comes from a legend about some deities who left their healing remedies behind here; the valley now abounds in medicinal herbs. We drove south from Gonchen Town along the Jinsha River Valley for more than 100 km to reach Maisu. It was early spring and the roadside peach blossoms were in full bloom, complementing the colourful Mani streamers tied there for the Tibetan New Year not long before. National Highway 107, the Gangbai Highway and eventually a country road took us into the Maisu Valley.

Southern School of Tibetan Medicine

The first Tibetan doctor I visited, Lore Phuntsog, was born in Chijorlung in Maisu. My friend Thubten, a local policeman, introduced us. Thubten once fell from horseback while on duty and was bedridden for months before recovering on medicine prescribed by the Dzongsar Monastery Tibetan Hospital in Maisu.

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The Dzongsar Monastery Tibetan Hospital is in a large white Tibetan building. The first time I saw Dr Lore Phuntsog, he was dressed in a dark purple Tibetan robe and sneakers, a pair of metal-framed glasses perched on his kind face. A keyboard hung across his chest and an IBM laptop was slung over his shoulder! Not only well known as a highly skilled doctor, Dr Lore is also as a versatile Tibetan artist and a preserver of traditional culture.

As a child he studied Buddhist sutras in a monastery. Later he successfully restored the Dzongsar Monastery and the Buddhist College. Although not a monk, the locals elected him Director of the Administrative Committee and President of the [Pancha Vidya] Buddhist College of the Dzongsar Monastery. In the past decade or so, more than 30 Buddhist teachers have graduated from the college to serve in 23 Buddhist colleges of various Tibetan Buddhist sects in Tibet.

Dzongsar Monastery has close ties to the development of Tibetan medicine. In the past, all the monks in the area were strictly trained in the Greater and Lesser Pancha Vidya, or the five studies of ancient India, and Tibetan medicine was one of the important courses of study. As a result, many monks became noted doctors.

Lore Phuntsog is the direct disciple of Khyentsei Wangpo — the first abbot of Dzongsar Monastery. A renowned Tibetan medical doctor, Lore is also well-educated in the history and culture of Tibetan medicine. Every night of my stay in Maisu, we sat in

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his kitchen by the light of the hearth, cups of warm buttered tea in hand, and explored the history of the Southern School of Tibetan Medicine.

Urinalysis — the Easiest Method of Diagnosis

The second morning of my stay, Dr Lore and I drove to the hospital from his hillside home. Along the way, a neatly dressed Tibetan waved us down. After the exchange of greetings, the Tibetan bashfully took a Coke bottle filled with yellow liquid from inside his robe. I was taken aback, but Dr Lore took the urine sample matter-of-factly and shook it lightly as he observed it. Then he produced a prescription pad from his pocket and quickly wrote out a list of medicines in Tibetan before instructing his patient on when and how to take them.

The diagnostic techniques of observation, listening to the heartbeat and other interior organs, feeling the pulse and asking questions found in traditional Chinese medicine are also used in Tibetan medicine. But above all, urinalysis is the easiest and most common method of diagnosis. After observing the patient's first urine of the day, a doctor can make a basic determination according to the colour, purity, odour, amount, any material floating in it and the duration of foam, among other things. Supplemental checks of the pulse and the tongue are then performed to back up the diagnosis.

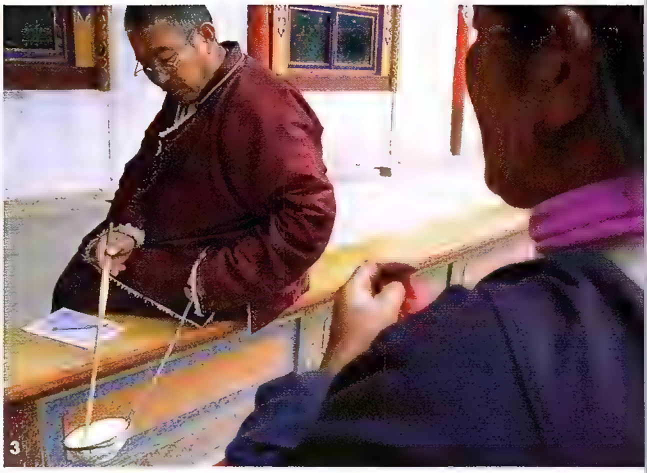
1. Maisu is known as a natural treasure house of medicinal herbs.

2. A bowl of zanba (roasted qingke barley flour) mixed with water and an IBM laptop; Lore Phuntsog seeks balance between tradition and modernization.

3. Lore Phuntsog examines a urine sample.

4. Spring is the most suitable season for bloodletting.

5. Many precious documents pertaining to Tibetan medicine are preserved at the Dergê Monastery Sutra-printing House.



The Four Medical Tantras

Xungba Namgyal Tasum (1395—1475), head of the Ngangring area north of Lhasa, was the founder of the Northern School of Tibetan Medicine, while the Southern School was founded by Surkha Nyamnyi Dorje (1439—1475), born in Surkhar, south of Lhasa. The latter was a lama of the Drupa Kagyu Sect. His nephew, Surkhar Lore Jarpo (1509—1585), author of Annotations to the Four Medical Tantras, played an important role in the development of Tibetan medicine. Palpung Monastery is a key monastery of the Kagyu Sect and the birthplace of the Southern School in the Kham area.

Tantra means "lineage". The basic text of Tibetan Medicine, called the "Four Tantras", was taught by Buddha himself. All Tibetan physicians study it.

The First Tantra, or "Root Tantra", contains a brief explanation of all diseases; therefore, it is like a seed of knowledge.

The Second Tantra, or "Explanatory Tantra", delves into the anatomy and physiology of the body, and the processes of birth and dying, in 31 chapters.

The Third Tantra, or "Oral Transmissions Tantra", deals with the causes, nature and treatments of diseases and their classifications in 92 chapters.

The Fourth Tantra, or "Last Tantra", outlines the 18 methods of diagnosis, pharmacology and support, or external treatments, in 25 chapters.

Modern Tibetan Medicine

Dr Lore runs his own pharmaceutical factory in the Dzongsar Monastery Hospital. As to whether traditional handiwork or machines are preferred for producing drugs, Dr Lore believes sanitation is the priority if Tibetan medicine is to spread beyond Tibet. Tibetan pills are traditionally handmade, but sanitary conditions and hygiene standards are inadequate. Also, people's hands may sweat while they work, but it is impossible to make the pills while wearing gloves. Therefore, he believes machinery production is better, and more accurate in terms of dosage control. After production, senior monks chant sutras to empower the medicine. Though by no means conservative, Dr Lore holds that tradition and modernization are not mutually exclusive and both can be accommodated in the production process.

Tibetan medicines must be taken strictly in accordance with traditional rules. Often they are prescribed to be taken in the morning, at noon, in the afternoon and evening, to coincide with Tibetan mealtimes (in many places it is still customary to have four meals a day, though this can consist of just a little qingke barley flour bread and a cup of buttered tea). According to Dr Lore, the timing for taking Tibetan medicine is quite logical — overall consideration of each drug's special properties, the conditions of the human body throughout the day and the regular phenomenal changes of the universe are all taken into account so that the curative effects will be at their most powerful.

Can Bloodletting Save Lives?

Lore Phuntsog showed me his left hand, which was marked by eight small scars. He said he once suffered a stroke and would have died if not for a timely bloodletting. Bloodletting is a typical Tibetan therapeutic measure, stemming from the belief that there is some 'bad blood' in the human body. Once this is bled out, goes the reasoning, the illness will be alleviated. The darker blood first bled out in some patients is thought to be this so-called bad blood. When it turns a fresher red, the bloodletting is stopped. The incision is pressed with a sterilized pebble and carefully wrapped up. The diet on the cold Qinghai-Tibet Plateau includes a high percentage of protein and fat. Thus, blood density is relatively high among Tibetans, making bloodletting a viable therapeutic technique.

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Tibetan medical theory holds that germs contracted in autumn will surface in spring after lurking in the body over the winter. When the three fundamental factors in the human body — rlung (wind), mkhris pa (air), badkan (fire) are affected at the same time by the four outside elements — wind, fire, water and earth — in springtime, illness occurs. Spring is known as the season for treating disease. Most people undergo bloodletting in the afternoon when the body's conditions are relatively stable. Of the 77 points for bloodletting on the body, most are on the head and the four limbs. Bloodletting has been shown to be effective in treating such common illnesses as liver disorders, stroke and even headache.

Moxibustion Helps Stroke Victims

Lore Phuntsog's four sons all practise Tibetan medicine. One evening at dusk, a doctor was summoned to see a stroke victim. Lore's youngest son,

1. A packaging workshop at Dzongsar Monastery Hospital. Tibetan medicine must be manufactured away from sunlight and women.

2. Trine at a patient's home, performing moxibustion therapy.

3. Most of the patients at the monastery clinic are treated by Mrs Lore.

Trine, packed some medicine and a long iron pole and hopped on his motorbike. In the patient's room, he heated the iron pole in the fire of a stove. Then he asked for a long piece of wool which he used to locate points on the elderly woman's head. He pressed on the points and checked for reactions. On the Qianding point, he cut away the hair and spread some roasted qingke barley flour, doing the same on both points of Fengchi. By then the iron pole was red hot. Trine pressed it on a point. Smoke rose from the woman's head, together with a smell of burning fat. But her groaning gradually ended, due either to the treatment, called moxibustion, or to its psychological effect.

According to Tibetan doctors, the human body is governed by two major meridians, or energy pathways: a white one (the nervous system) and a black one (the circulatory system). A person receiving bloodletting treatment for the black meridian should not undergo moxibustion to stimulate the white meridian. Moxibustion therapy can be treated through some 300 points on the body. Instruments of different materials, including gold, silver, copper and iron, are used for different ailments.

Tsothal: Miracle Drug

The Tibetan pharmaceutical Tsothal is something of a medical miracle, not least because its major ingredient is mercury. Although mercury is known to be highly poisonous, in Tibet it is used to intensify the effects of a medicine and thereby bring about a quicker result. The drug is only found in very expensive medicines. Tsothal is actually produced through a chemical reduction that converts the poison, detoxifying it so that only its medicinal essence remains. Like many substances, mercury has the dualistic nature of possessing both poisonous and curative powers. With its quality and weight changed after abstraction, mercury Tsothal will decompose in water and quickly diffuse on the surface. Presently, international medical experts only recommend herbal Tibetan medicines with Tsothal for human use.

Historical records indicate that Tsothal production was begun by Dzogchen Urgyenpa (1230—1309), the spiritual teacher of the third abbot Karmapa. He is said to have travelled to a spot somewhere west of Ngari in western Tibet on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to learn how to process mercury.

Tibetan Medicine on the Net?

In 2001, Lore Phuntsog set up the Yuthok Nyingma Yonten Gonpo Health Centre. Located in Dergê County, the NGO practises Tibetan medicine, develops the medical culture, protects natural herbal resources, helps the disabled and provides free medical aid to the poor.

Although electricity only became available in Maisu last year, I saw monks using Tibetan software on computers at the Dzongsar Monastery Hospital and the Buddhist College. Perhaps the Internet will also be accessible here soon.

Dr Drama of the Grasslands

On the way to Ramgo Township, our driver, Mr Tang, said I was lucky, as the highway and the Nyakchu River Bridge had only been in use for a few months. In the past, travellers had to spend three days riding on horseback along the Nyakchu River to reach Ramgo. It would take a good car an entire day to get there provided it was not caught in a rainstorm. On the day the roads were formally opened, he drove some officials there. It was the first time many of the locals had ever seen a car. Some of the elderly folks even ran back home to get large bunches of hay to feed the car, saying that after such a long run, it must be tired and hungry.

There were many people waiting quietly in the clinic on the day I visited. Dr Drama was very busy handing out medicine and writing directions for use. He often drew symbols on the bags: the sun for daytime use; the moon for night; a beetle-browed face for headache; three circles for increased dosage. Many of the locals were illiterate, so he used these illustrations to explain how the medicine should be used.

Affordable Treatment for Liver Disease

Dr Drama's patients are mostly herdsmen from pasturing areas as far as the Yushu, Baima and Jigzhi counties of Qinghai Province and Rangtang in Aba Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The rest, from nearby Sershul, Serthar and Garzê, seemed to visit him in an endless stream. After the road to Ramgo was completed, the number of patients increased dramatically. Tsering Lama from Dzogchen Monastery rode for seven hours on his motorbike to get a prescription for his younger brother who has suffered from an enlarged liver for four years. He spent more than 10,000 yuan on doctors in Kangding and Chengdu, but showed no improvement and was bedridden. When he heard of Dr Drama's success in treating liver problems, he tried some of the medicine. After taking the drug, which cost only four yuan, for 20 days, he was able to get up and walk.

Dr Drama learned his remedies from his teacher, Ramgo Abbot. All are herbal medicines without expensive ingredients like Tsothal. As life is hard on the pastureland and the locals do not make much money, he usually charges no more than one or two yuan for his medicines; even the most expensive ones are under 10 yuan. For the poor, treatment and medicine are free.

The newspapers in which he wraps his prescriptions come from the Dergê County seat. Many institutions and offices save their used papers for him.

One Patient, 39 Urine Samples

At the clinic I met Aga and Qoixi Lhamo and two others who had come from Datangba in Garzê on motorbikes. They were holding several packets of medicine. When I asked why they had so many packets, they said they would be delivering them to other people. Folks they met along they way had asked them to place and pick up various prescriptions to drop off on their way back. If the medicines could not be prepared within a day, they would stay at a friend's home until everything was ready.

Such favours are not uncommon. Two years ago four herdsmen arrived on horseback, having ridden for three days along the Nyakchu River from Tsangsar Gongma in Sershul County. They carried with them 39 urine samples and over 60 requests for medicine. They stayed over for about twelve days until all the medicines were ready.

Broken Line of Succession

To my repeated questions about training successors, Dr Drama hesitantly hoped he would find someone willing to devote himself to Tibetan medicine. He once had several apprentices, but they had all left, due to either the hard lifestyle or malpractice. The locals urged him to find a successor and proposed his nephew, the abbot of Ramgu Monastery, who is proficient in the Tibetan language and is well respected. He said the young man was good in all ways but was a bit lazy. I wondered

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1. Dr Drama's clinic. Every night after the patients have gone, the doctor writes out the details of the day's appointments. Behind him is a portrait of his teacher, Abbot Ramgo Thubten.

2. Waiting to see a doctor.

3. Dr Drama sees patients anytime, wherever he is.

4. Dr Drama draws symbols on the prescription packages to illustrate how to take the drugs properly. Many of his patients are illiterate.

5. A patient leaves Dr Drama's clinic with several bags of medicine to be distributed throughout the countryside.

whether Dr Drama would ever find a satisfying student.

Every evening after 10 pm when the last patients have left, Dr Drama makes detailed notes about the day's appointments, including the number and conditions of both local and outside patients. In the 31 years since he started the practice, he has done the same thing every night and has accumulated a large pile of notebooks. From early in the morning when he had some zanba, or roasted qingke barley flour bread, until the evening, I didn't see him take a single drink of water or rest for even a moment. After writing his notes, he boiled some noodles with wild herbs provided by the villagers, dipped them in some vegetable oil and ate.

Someone called Dr Drama an incarnate lama as his work is so highly respected. The people also call him Lhaje — a respectful address for doctors during the Tubo Kingdom period under the rule of Songtsam Gambo (c.617—650). He devotes nearly all his time to treating patients and making medicine, but their payments usually do not cover his expenses, as a dose of medicine costing one or two yuan can last for 20 days. Tarlag County in Qinghai Province sent a special envoy here with an invitation to work there and the promise of a high salary, but the doctor refused, saying, "What about the people here?" On top of that, he made a will with 10 wishes in it. He said his ancestors came from Qinghai and Sershul, with the blood of some heroic clan running in the family. In this almost saint-like doctor, I saw the pure, natural qualities of Tibetans, and I was convinced that this very spirit can carry on with and promote the Southern School of Tibetan Medicine. But 20 or 30 years from now, what with the growing pursuit of material wealth, will such a man still be found on the grasslands?

Before I left the clinic, I asked the doctor if any of his wishes remained unfulfilled. County Governor Tashi told me that to this day Dr Drama has not been a regular employee of the County Health Bureau. I was shocked at his temporary employment status, considering he has worked so hard day and night for decades.

Incarnate Lama Phurbu — Willing to Bear Burdens

Lama Phurbu, an old friend of mine, is the incarnate lama of Purungnang Monastery and Yasha Monastery in Garzê County. As a child, he was believed to be the reincarnated Lama of Purungnang Monastery and he served in the Garzê Monastery. Not long after, the Democratic Reform began and he

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returned to the secular world in his hometown of Sengkhang. Growing up to drive tractors and trucks, he became well-known in the Garzê area for his tall build and strong sense of justice.

One day he met an official with the County Religion Bureau who asked him if he would like to study at the High-level Tibetan Buddhism Institute of China in Beijing. Thinking Beijing might be a lot of fun, he went. He eventually regained his religious status, returning to Garzê after three years of study to rebuild the monastery.

Incarnate Lama Phurbu never studied medicine, so he first had to start a business in order to restore the monastery. Out of sympathy for the elderly, he built a home for the aged in Purungnang Monastery with room for about 20 residents. As he looked after their living and medical expenses and it was not convenient for them to get to a doctor, living on the mountain as they did, Governor Tashi bought the lama a plot of land in the county seat on which the home is being rebuilt.

The Incarnate Lama has since opened two successful wholesale drugstores in Garzê Town. Still, building expenses for the home are costly; much of the material must be bought from the elsewhere. The estimated cost for putting up the building is 1.6 million yuan. Incarnate Lama Phurbu has sold his own house, but even with the profits from his businesses, there is still not enough money. I suggested he go begging for alms, but he responded with a stern "No", being too independent and strong-willed to ask for assistance.

In order to save money, Incarnate Lama Phurbu drives the truck himself. Whenever asked for help, he offers it at once. When asked to perform a Buddhist service, he always turns up regardless of the distance and the payment offered. No wonder the locals regard him so highly.

Developing the Garzê Pill Trade

Each time I visit Garzê, the Incarnate Lama and I discuss many things. He is idealistic and ambitious, fully devoted to his pursuits and responsibilities. Years ago he got the idea of further developing the Garzê pills made by the nuns in his monasteries and selling them to the rest of the country and the world. Because it never materialized, I thought it must have been a whim. Then he mentioned it again on this trip.

Lhorong Tsultrim, the previous incarnate lama of Purungnang Monastery, was renowned in Kham for his medical skills. Born in Sengkhang Township, Garzê County, he studied Buddhism and medicine in Dergê County and in Tibet. After earning his degree and qualifying as an abbot, he returned to Garzê to practise medicine. He taught four students throughout his life, including Yeshe Dorje and Yarma Tseten, two famed doctors still practising in Garzê. The Garzê pill, which consists of more than 20 herbal ingredients that effectively treat diarrhoea, gastro-enteritis, the common cold and headache, is also highly commended abroad. The prescription has remained in the control of the Tawa Monastery.

Today Yeshe Dorje is the most influential Tibetan

1. Incarnate Lama Phurbu at the entrance to his drugstore at Purungnang Monastery.

2. Tibetan medical instruments.

3. This is the first year that medicinal herbs are being grown with government support. Will they earn more than the qingke barley crops?

doctor in Garzê. He has opened a hospital in Garzê County Town, which also produces Tibetan medicines. Knowing the current Incarnate Lama's difficulties, and out of respect for his teacher, Yeshe Dorje is very generous to my friend. Every spring the mountain herbs picked by nuns from the two monasteries led by Incarnate Lama Phurbu are processed for free to produce the Garzê pills, which are then sold in the Incarnate Lama's drugstores. One ingredient in the Garzê pill prescription needs to be soaked in wine and left in an underground cellar for some time before inclusion. As the drug is somewhat poisonous, it must be strictly controlled and dispensed: an inadequate amount will not kill germs, but an excessive amount will harm the body. Since Yeshe Dorje is over 70, Incarnate Lama Phurbu wants to find a couple of clever and competent nuns to study under the doctor. He also intends to buy a set of processing machines himself.

Production Problems

The reputation and affordability of Garzê pills have made them popular purchases at the Incarnate Lama's shops. Increasing market demand has prompted many people to try to strike it rich by copying the pills.

However, the original formula of the Garzê pill is known only to Yeshe Dorje, the Purungnang Monastery and the Yasha Monastery, with a slight difference between the formulae of these three guardians. So who would hold the rights to the Garzê pill formula if Incarnate Lama Phurbu develops his pill production into a larger business?

Furthermore, it is difficult to obtain a permit for formal medicine production because the final authority lies with the State Drug Administration. And the examination and analysis of Tibetan medicines is conducted in the same way Western medicines are assessed.

Translated by Yu Ling

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Tips for the Traveller

Transportation to Garzê: It takes two days to travel from Chengdu to Kangding and then on to Garzê. Regular daily buses are available at about 250 yuan/person.

Accommodation: A youth hostel in the home for the elderly on Jiefang (Liberation) Street near the old town of Garzê, with a public bathhouse, toilet and access to the Internet, charges about 25 yuan/ person (Tel: 836 752 5367). In Garzê Town, the Kham Hotel, the guesthouses of the Post Office and the Long-distance Telecommunications Bureau, and the Drolde Hotel are available, charging from 30~200 yuan/ person.

Garzê pills: 15 yuan each. The pills are especially effective in treating intestinal and stomach ailments.

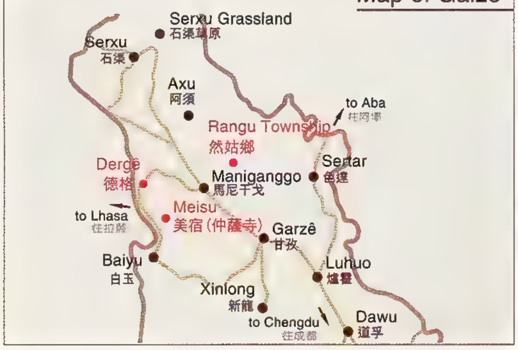
Transportation to the Dzongsar Monastery Tibetan Hospital: A day is needed to travel from Garzê to the Dergê County Seat. A bus runs every two days from the Dergê Hotel in the county seat to the hospital in the Maisu District at about 30 yuan for the 5-hour drive.

Accommodation: 10~30 yuan/person for both the Reception Centre of the Buddhist College in the Dzongsar Monastery and the Township Government Reception Centre.

Service fee for a Tibetan doctor: There is no outpatient charge for locals and visitors alike. Fees are collected only for medicine, priced according to the ingredients.

Please note: Altitude sickness may occur as the area is 3,200 metres above sea level.

Map of Gaizê



Zhao Cheng'an and the Land of Xinjiang

Photos • Zhao Cheng'an Article • Shi Baoxiu

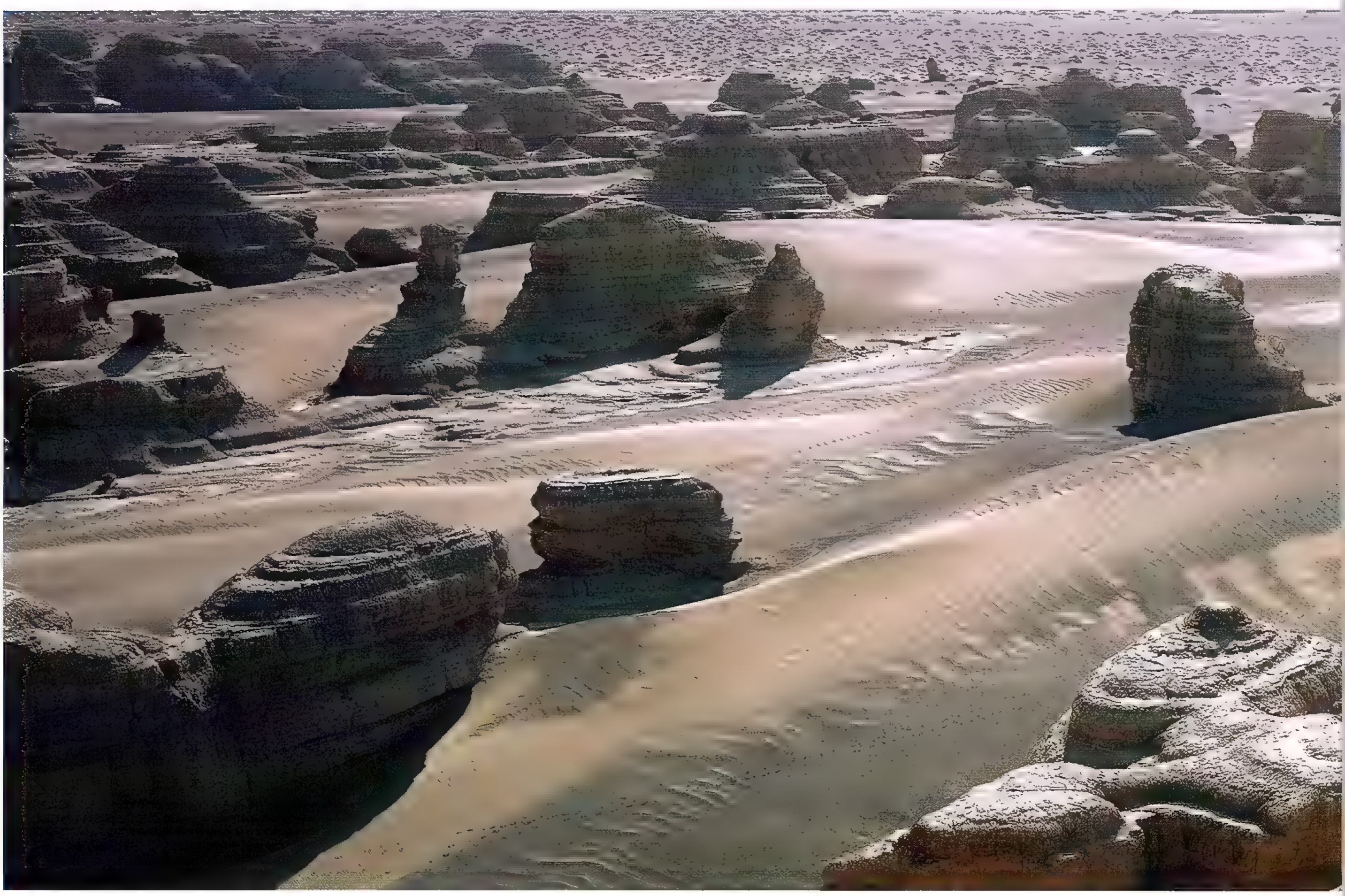
Zhao Cheng'an (趙承安), a senior press photographer and an old friend of *China Tourism*, left us suddenly this spring. He had dedicated his life to photographing the landscapes of Xinjiang. When the news came, none of us could believe it was true or that he would never call us again saying: "Hello, I've come to Hong Kong and am now at the entrance of Westlands Centre..."

I found out on the evening of March 8 when Zheng Ligang, the magazine's Shenzhen-based reporter, called me. I had just returned to my home in Xi'an. "Why weren't you at Old Zhao's memorial? It was held today at Karamay in Xinjiang." My heart sank. "Has Old Zhao gone? It's impossible," I said. "Didn't you know? Old Zhao died of a heart attack on March 5."

A Soundless Farewell

As soon as we hung up, I dialled Old Zhao's cell phone number, all the while wondering what I was doing. After all, it had been three days since Zhao died; would it still ring?

There was ringing, followed by the sad voice of Sister Zhou, Zhao's wife. "Though he is gone, I've kept his phone on, as many of his friends still don't know he passed away. The cell phone helps me keep in contact with Old Zhao's friends." Sister Zhou regretted what had happened. If she had not returned to Chengdu to prepare their residence for the winter but stayed by his side, the tragedy might have been avoided, she said. That night, Old Zhao stayed at their home in Karamay. He took a bath after the busy



1. The landforms of Sanlongsha on the east edge of Lop Nur, 50 km from Yumenguan Pass. Zhang Yimou shot the film *Hero* here. Zhao Cheng'an and his family slept here for two nights waiting for the perfect morning light for his photos.

day had faded away, and then washed his clothes while a friend slept in another room. When the friend woke at 8 the next morning, he found Zhao in his pyjamas leaning back on the sofa. He thought Zhao was sleeping, but when he called out, there was no response. He touched Zhao's hands and found they were cold. According to the doctor, Zhao had most likely died during a heart attack. He was only 65 and should have been enjoying the autumn, the harvest season, of his life.

Zhao's death may well have been brought on by fatigue. Last June, when I went to Xinjiang on a business trip, I visited him in Urümqi. He had lost his hearing by then. Sister Zhou told me that when Zhao took photographs, he always chose an extremely dangerous road where he could shoot his pictures from an unusual angle.

He did not follow any sort of regular daily routine. Very often, he worked until 2 or 3 a.m., writing or compiling photos. Sometimes, when he got an idea in his dreams, he would get up immediately to apply it to his work, never caring what time it was. His whole being was controlled by his career, despite the fact that he was getting old and had diabetes. When his wife tried to get him to slow down, he wouldn't listen and often argued that she should not bother him when he was working. On such occasions, Sister Zhou would go back to their original home in Chengdu to give herself some time and space to calm down. The separations gnawed at her, however, so she was always back by his side within a few days. What kind of love did they have? Beyond love, there was the life-long partnership in which they walked side by side through everything. Their love and concern for each other penetrated every trifling issue of daily life.

Now Old Zhao has gone, but Sister Zhou is keeping her husband's bedroom and office just as they were when he was alive. She works hard sorting through his more than 100,000 photographs, which, together with the dozen or so published albums, represent the soul and the legacy of Old Zhao. Sister Zhou told me that though she could not erase the emptiness in her heart, when she touched her husband's works, she felt much better.

A Zigzagging Road

Zhao Cheng'an lived a difficult life and suffered more than others. He was born in Ankang in Shaanxi Province. As a teenager, he enrolled at the Middle School Affiliated to the Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts. His family was so poor at that time that he could not afford the bus fare from his hometown to Xi'an.

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1. Cracks left by a volcano eruption, at the foot of the Alqin Earthen Volcano in Wusu County.

2. These diversiform-leaved poplars are much like Zhao Cheng'an, a man of great vitality.

Wearing a pair of straw sandals, he walked for seven days over the Qinling Mountains. When he finally arrived in Xi'an, however, school was already in session and he had missed registration.

At 18, he went to the Karamay Oilfield, 3,000 km from his home, to work. Due to his love of contemporary Russian paintings and his basic training in fine arts, he was chosen to work for the oilfield's propaganda programme. So at 21, he turned to photography. In 1980, he began taking photos of Xinjiang's geography and landforms. From that point on, he was either flying in the air or driving across the land pointing his camera at the natural world around him and scarcely resting until the day he died.

He put strict demands on himself, working 10 times harder than ordinary photographers. One of the principles he lived by was that he should never shoot a scene from a highway. To find a unique angle for a picture, he often walked through the wilderness or climbed a mountain on horseback. A second principle was that he must explore what his forerunners had not uncovered, such as rare landforms and plant groups. He was constantly looking for different light for his pictures, so he often stayed in one spot for two or three days, sleeping in his small tent at night and living on instant noodles. One year, when he went to the Sanlongsha *yadang* landforms near Lop Nur, it was cloudy. While waiting for the best early morning rays, he and his family spent two chilly nights in a concave spot. When they woke up in the morning, their sleeping bags were full of sand.

He was in his 40s when an old back injury, caused by maltreatment during the "cultural revolution", deteriorated. Mobility is a photographer's most basic requirement, but one morning he woke up nearly paralysed. Not only was he unable to care for himself during the day, he could not sleep at night either. Zhao sought treatment in Beijing, Shanxi and Xinjiang. During this long journey through the darkness, he once gave up all hope. Thankfully, after undergoing treatment and an operation over the course of a year, he could eventually stand and walk again. Time became even more precious to him. Seizing day and night, he threw himself completely into photographing the land of Xinjiang.

Zhao's efforts were paid back. He was recognized as a distinctive photographer and awarded a gold medal by the China Photographers' Association. Eventually, he produced 10 albums of the scenic land and geographic formations of Xinjiang. But trying times still lay ahead. In the autumn of 2004, he lost his hearing. Suddenly, perhaps ironically, only the visual ' figures, colours, darkness and light ' made up his world; never again would he enjoy the sound of tapping raindrops, the roar of the wind or chirping birds, beautiful singing and cosy

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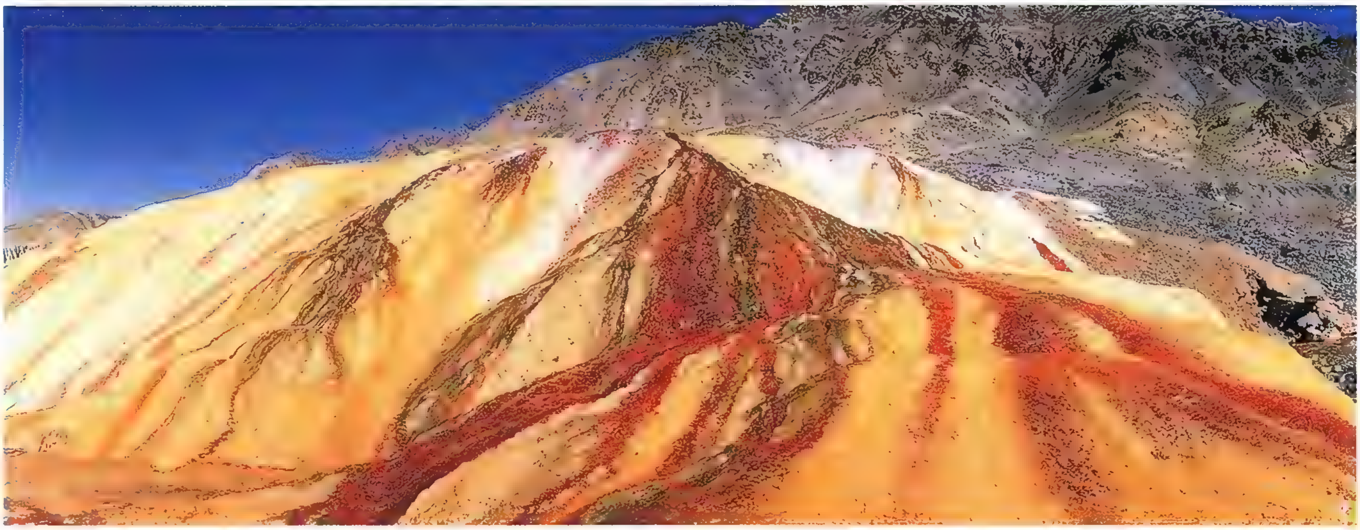

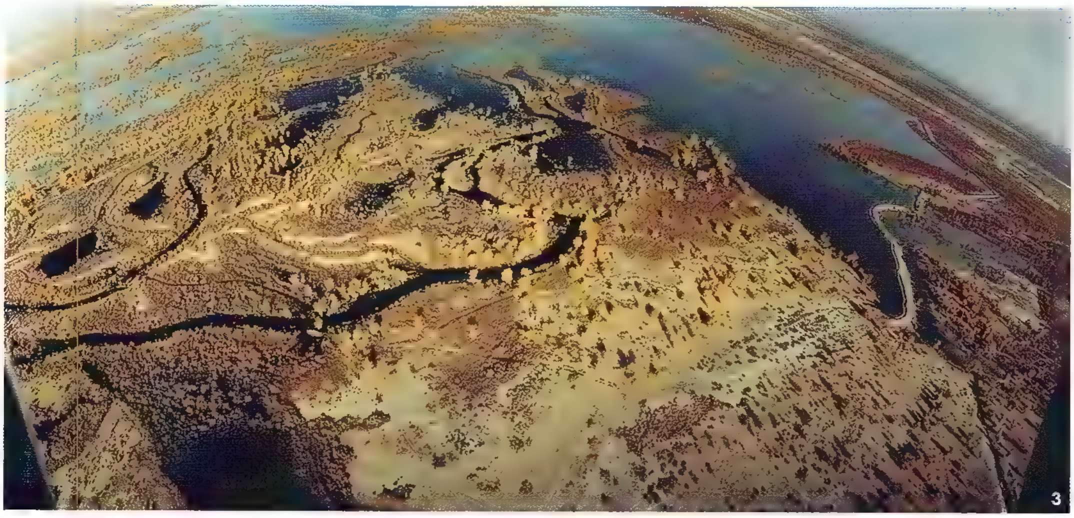

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chats with friends.

The following June, when I returned to Urümqi after finishing an assignment in Ili, we "talked" for two hours. He talked and I wrote; my words filled five pages of paper. Zhao showed his optimism during our meeting. He told me that as long as he could walk, he would continue his career as a photographer, and he would complete his new album, *The Land of Xinjiang*. He also realized that his deafness was a sign of further problems to come, so he felt he had to hurry and complete his mission.

Nearly a month after I left him, he was in an accident on his way to Jimunai in northern Xinjiang. A young Kazak on a motorcycle pulled out in front of his vehicle. To avoid the crash, his driver turned the car into the side of a cliff. Old Zhao ended up with a damaged shoulder blade and some broken ribs. He also sustained facial injuries, had some teeth knocked out, and was hospitalized for almost two months.

In November of that same year, Old Zhao went to see a doctor at Beijing Tongren Hospital to have an artificial cochlea implanted in his ear. After four months of trials and adjustments, Zhao regained some of his hearing. He was so excited that he immediately wrote a letter to Wang Miao, Vice-Director of China Tourism press. In it, he expressed two wishes: First, he wanted to complete *The Land of Xinjiang* and have it published in both Chinese and English; second, he accepted an invitation to come to Hong Kong and give a lecture with a slide show of Xinjiang's landscapes to the magazine's readers. At the end, he wrote: "Thanks for your concern during the days when I lived in a soundless world." He once told a friend that he had kept Wang's suggestion to compile the book in mind. "If it is objective, cool-eyed and professional, *The Land of Xinjiang* will be accepted by readers around the world as well as later generations," she had told him.

The Dream Will Go On

Sadly, Old Zhao passed away before he could see the bilingual (Chinese, English) edition of *The Land of Xinjiang*.

There are not many people like Zhao, who had a strong sense of the brevity of life and who struggled hard to have no regrets at the end.

However, we, the survivors, will never forget Xinjiang. We'll visit it frequently, touring the sites where Zhao took those thrilling photos and enjoying the charm of this otherworldly land he loved and recorded so beautifully.

Translated by Gloria Shang

1. A bird's-eye view of the winding Ili River.

2. The Blooding Stream, a landform created by an outflow of underground sulphur. During the 1980s and 90s, Zhao Cheng'an took numerous photos of geographic phenomena, including earthen volcanoes, naturally bubbling petroleum, decaying granite and water-rusted sand valleys.

3. Diversiform-leaved poplars grow along the lower stream of the Tarim River. Several times, Zhao persisted in tying himself outside the door of an aircraft to take photos from the air. If the pilot forbid him to do so, he would write a life-and-death letter to show his determination. In the past 10 years, many diversiform-leaved poplars have died as the river water level has decreased.

4. A garden in the air — a photo taken in the Kongnaisi highland pasture.

Incense on the Xiangchehe River —
A Fragrant Tradition

Photos & Article • Suolang Zhaxi

The scenery and ethnic customs of the Xiangchehe River in southwestern Guizhou Province are certainly noteworthy, but during my two visits it was the handmade incense that made it such a special place.

Tongguang Village, a collection of 12 rustic hamlets, nestles alongside the Xiangchehe River. In two of those hamlets, Qiaotong and Tongguang, incense is still being produced in the traditional way. Qiaotong, across the water, is mainly inhabited by Miaos, while an abundance of Buyei populate Tongguang.

Every House a Workshop

Having driven 33 km northwest from Anlong County in a light drizzle, I turned left onto a rural road at Getang County and passed a conspicuous Miao archway. One kilometre later, I was in Tongguang Village.

I came upon Yu Yinggang, 69, who was smoking

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a water pipe as he watched his wife work. A metre-long workbench used for making incense stood beneath a window. Incense powder and sticks of bamboo (also called incense sticks) sat on the left side of the bench, while some pale green celadon incense dough waited on the right. The old woman smeared a layer of the incense paste on the edge of the bench and rolled a bamboo stick into it. She then rolled it into the red incense powder.

When the old man finished smoking, he sat at the other side of the bench. He held in his hand a wooden board which he used to compress the incense paste onto the sticks. He then gathered up a bouquet of the sticks and set them under the eaves to dry.

The making of incense has been passed down in this village for a hundred years. However, because no exact record exists, no one can say for sure when it first began. To the villagers, it is simply the common local job, not something they would consider an art or even part of a folk culture.

So they were surprised by my curiosity. As he was walked back to his room and lit another water pipe, the old man said to me, "Everyone in this village can do this job; even my four-year-old grandson can do it. A long time ago every household made incense."

He also said it was harvest time, so fewer people were making incense and then it was only the elderly. His son had left for Guangdong two years earlier to look for work.

2,000 Sticks a Day

Making incense is a traditional sideline for the villagers. A proficient worker can make about 2,000 sticks a day. According to the market, the sticks sell for two to three fen each. If an old couple like the Yus could keep up with that output, they would earn about 3,000 yuan a year. For them, that was good money.

Thanks to the steady market for incense, the industry in Tongguang Village has continued and the traditional production methods have been preserved. Because in the past every month brought some sort of god-worshipping activity in this area, throughout history copious amounts of incense have been consumed here. Even on days when nothing special is happening, villagers still like burning it. One common use is to keep mosquitoes away at night.

Tongguang Village is renowned for its incense, the product of several hundred years of dedicated work and a well-earned reputation for quality. The villagers strictly follow every part of the ancient process and never skimp on materials. Take the small bamboo sticks as an example; the peeled sticks are always dried in the sun, so as to prevent them from growing mouldy later on.

Incense is made from very simple ingredients. Several kinds of incense leaves are added to wood pulp powder. According to Mr Yu, the kinds of incense made in the past were much more complicated than those of today because they were combined with various types of Chinese medicinal herbs.

The incense made in Tongguang has five components: flammable material, the incense mixture, a bonding agent, paint and bamboo. The old couple assembled the parts with amazing quickness. The handiwork seems very simple, but if you break down the process, there are actually 36 steps, each reflecting the wisdom of the ancient Chinese people. To make the incense paste, first trim the incense leaves (birch leaves, also called glutinous leaves), dry them, mash them into a pulp and mix with sawdust. The green glutinous incense paste is now ready.

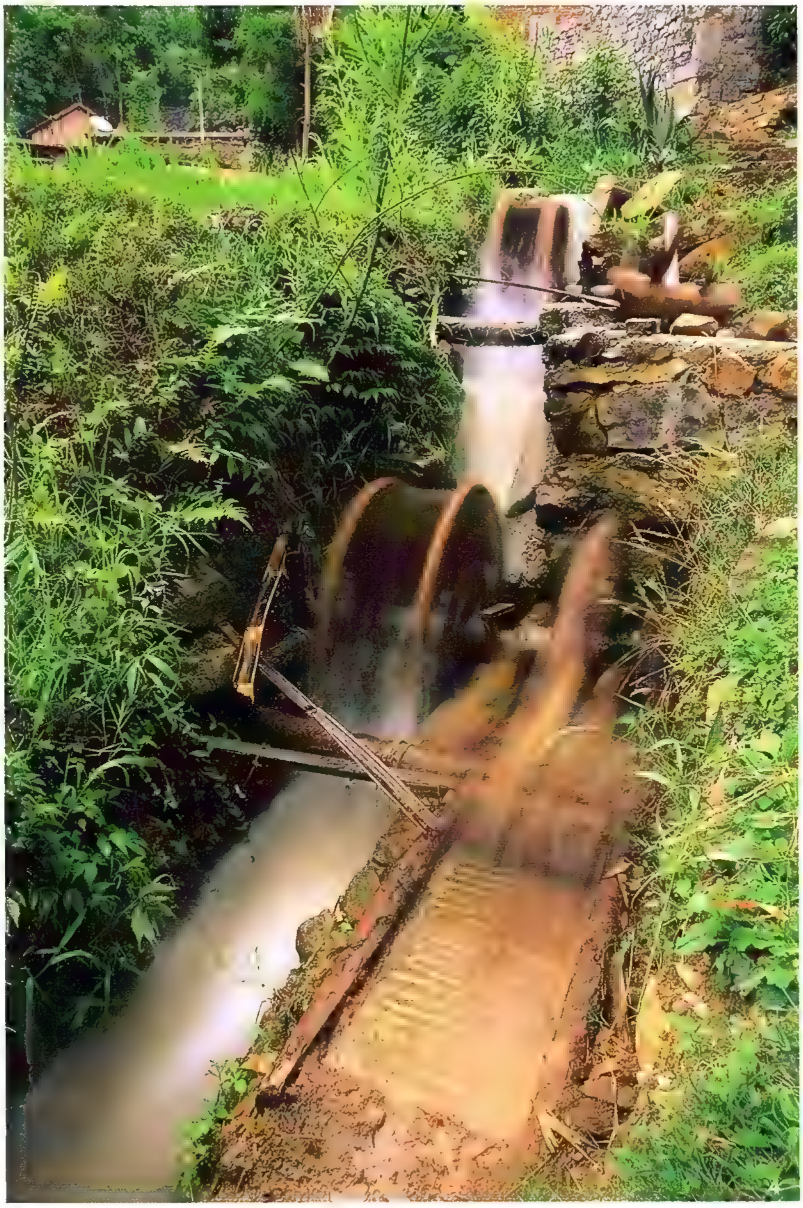
The technique for making cakes of incense is even more ingenious: first, an old wooden machine is used to grind tree powder (formerly camphor was used but

1.Handmade incense must be laid out under the eaves to dry.

2.The bamboo sticks are rolled on a board so that the incense paste adheres evenly.

3.A wooden board is used to compress the incense paste onto the sticks.

4.The ancient incense cake machine, with is wooden water wheels, driving belt, gears and millstone, can grind enough sawdust to make 50,000 sticks.



1. The incense goddess of Tongguang Village is a natural formation, sitting in the stone forest by a mountain.

2. Villagers worship a statue of the Supreme Lord of Incense, also called the Incense Ancestor.

3. Incense is dried in the sun to prevent it getting mouldy after being kept for a long time.

it is now replaced by other kinds of wood); next, water is added automatically while the machine is working; then, the wood pulp is placed in a bag and the water squeezed out. After the pulp is dried, you are left with a gourd-shaped incense cake. A muller (a sort of pestle) may also be used to crush the incense cake and grind in some red stone powder.

Tongguang Hamlet now has six communal incense cake machines. One incense cake machine can grind out 25 kg of sawdust, enough to make 50,000 incense sticks.

Burning Desires

I met Wang Jian on my second visit to the Xiangche River. Although he wasn't a tour guide, he was certainly qualified for the task.

Born in Tongguang Village, Wang Jian grew up by the Xiangche River. He had been away from his village for some 30 years, but his love for the place was apparent. He was intrigued that a stranger would be so interested in the area's incense culture, so he volunteered to show me around.

Incense is extremely important in Chinese people's lives. Everyone in China burns it and all for different reasons as well. People light incense sticks when they pray to their ancestors, when they worship the gods or when they admire mountains, rivers, trees and rocks; they do it in temples, on the streets, beside wells and by their cooking ranges. From weddings, funerals and festivals to ceremonies honouring their ancestors, they burn incense on many occasions. It is deeply rooted in the culture.

A Way of Life and a Livelihood

Wang Jian took me to the remains of the Incense Ancestral Temple. At the base of a huge tree before the ruins stood an intricately carved stone statue, about one feet tall. This demure figure was the Incense Ancestor or Supreme Lord of Incense, which Wang Jian regarded as a treasure.

"In 1961, before my father died, he told me that the Incense Ancestral Temple had been torn down when the movement to abolish superstitions started. Fortunately, he was able to save this stone statue by burying it at the original site. He asked me to dig it out and continue worshipping it. At the time, there was still no freedom of religion, so I didn't do as my father asked. But many years later when my pregnant niece was hoping to give birth to a boy, my mother asked me to dig out the statue and pray to it. My whole family joined in the worshipping and, before long, my niece had a baby boy."

Apart from the incense ancestor, there is an incense goddess, though she is not a carving but a naturally formed likeness that sits among some rocks near a mountain. Wang Jian told me her story, which is similar to other touching Chinese legends.

But to me, Wang Jian's own story was just as touching. "You could say I was supported by incense. When I was a child, my family was poor. My two sisters had to make incense day and night so that I could afford to go to school. My father worked very hard, too. Sometimes even on his way to pay a social call, he would cut bamboo sticks as he walked. When I was in the fifth grade at primary school, my father died. I graduated, but my family could no longer afford to pay for my education. At that time schools were short of teachers. Primary school graduates were allowed to teach at primary schools. So I went to work as a teacher."

He took me to visit his second sister, Wang Dazhen, a 60-year-old Buyei woman. She had lived in Tongguang Hamlet all her life. Her home was simple and on the table in the middle of the house incense was burning. Like the other villagers, she also kept to the tradition of burning incense and kowtowing three times every morning and every night. It was such a traditional home that I was surprised by the couplet on the door, which read: "Before my door, the Xiangche River is flowing; outside my house people, cars and horses are bustling." The horizontal scroll read: "Developing Tourism."

Various Incense Customs

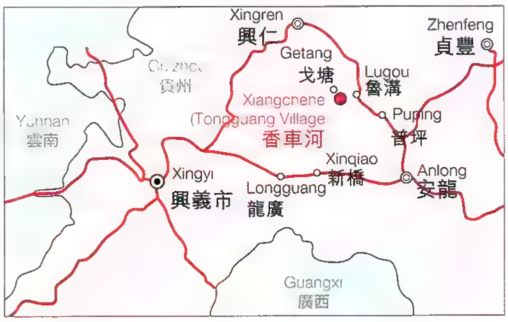
A government office now stands at the entrance of the village. According to Wang Jian, grand worshipping rituals are held there every January 15 and July 15 of the lunar calendar. On these days, there is an "incense fight", an activity that kids particularly love. On November 1 of the lunar calendar, an incense festival takes place. On that day, every family takes part, selling and burning incense, making it a bit like an "incense culture day".

On other important days, incense sticks are placed along the streets and every 1/3 metre each family must drive one incense stick into the ground, all the way from their home to the street. Before the young women in this village get married, they are required to learn how to make incense. It is a practical skill but also a tradition, and if the aspiring bride fails, her would-be mother-in-law will not approve of the union. After the wedding, the young couples must worship the incense ancestor and fetch water from the One-heart Spring alongside the Incense Ancestral Temple.

Incense has truly permeated every aspect of life here.

Translated by Nicole Ouyang

Travel Tips



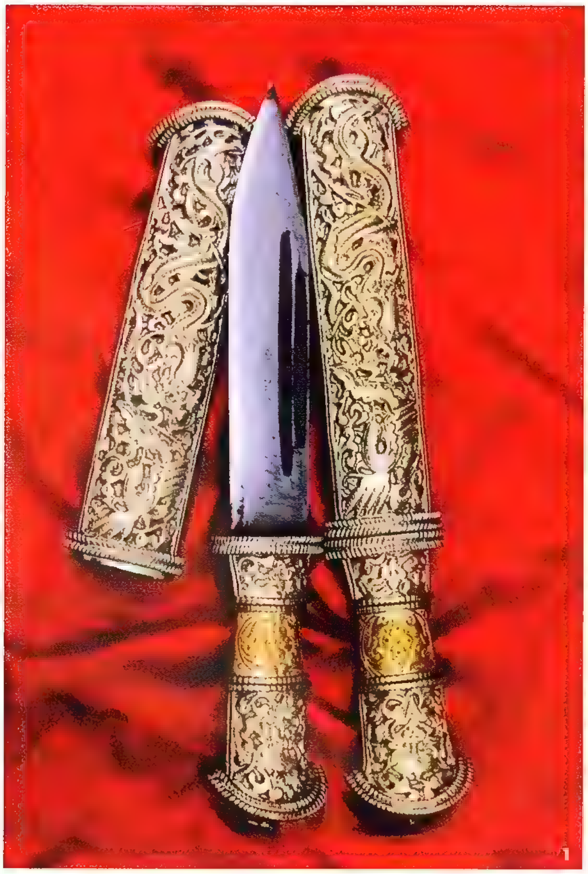
Transportation:

By air: Hong Kong—Guiyang, HK$1,400; Guangzhou—Guiyang, 770 yuan; Shenzhen—Guiyang, 940 yuan.

By train: The soft bed from Guangzhou to Guiyang costs 337 yuan, while the soft seat is 210 yuan. After arriving in Guiyang, take the three-hour commuter bus trip to Anlong (80 yuan). The bus ride from Anlong County to the Xiangchehe River is 10 yuan and takes about half an hour.

Accommodation: As there are no hotels at the Xiangchehe River, it is best to stay in Anlong County. The Zhaoti Hotel charges 80 yuan/single-bed room; the Xinhecheng Hotel charges 40 yuan/single-bed room or 60 yuan/double-bed room.

Palyul is situated between the northern and southern Sichuan-Tibet Highway 991 km from Chengdu, capital city of Southwest China's Sichuan Province. In Palyul, near the famous Kathok Monastery is the township of Hepo, which is famous for the manufacture of Tibetan knives. Almost every household in the village produces these knives.



Tibetan Knives

Photos & Article • Shui Xiaojie

It is said, that in the time of the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo (617—650), troops were stationed in the city of Kham to make weapons for war preparations, since then Hepo at Palyul began to make knives. After King Ling Gesar took the throne, he gathered many craftsmen together to hasten the making of weapons and forced Chodar, a famous Hor tribe metal forger to take on apprentices and teach them his skill. As a result, a primitive method of iron smelting was created. Even to this day, in the Arengou area of Rejia Township, iron slag from the smelting of that time can still be seen. In 1159, the first monastery of Nyingma, worshipping Tibetan Buddhism was built in Hepo. Tulku (the Incarnate Lama) Tsalpa Garde Gonpo travelled to China seven times to employ famous Han forgers who could not only offer new content into the folk art of Tibetan areas but also expand the channels of importing materials. After the Yuan Dynasty ended, the Khatok Monastery invited craftsmen from China and other Tibetan areas to introduce their skills, enabling the metal products in Hepo to evolve from simple weapons to articles used for Buddhist rites and folk artworks. By the time of the Qing Dynasty, the Palyul Tibetan knives and other folk artworks had not only become famous in Kham but also were sold to all Tibetan areas in China, India, Bhutan, Nepal and other neighbouring regions and countries.

In recent years, the remote Palyul County has attracted an increasing amount of tourists. In order to accelerate the development of Palyul, the county government established an association for the traditional craftsmen of Tibetan knives at Hepo, which also produces horse-riding equipment including saddles, stirrups and harnesses. Other Tibetan lifestyle necessities such as ghee buckets, ghee boxes, bowls and wares for Buddhist rites including suona horns, amulets and prayer beads are made here as well. However, the most famous item the Tibetan knife, is still produced and now comes in various models including men's broadswords, bayonets and daggers and a style for women also.

1. The case and sheath of the Palyul Tibetan knives are carved with delicate patterns of coiling dragons, auspicious clouds and flowers.

2. Remote Palyul lies in the Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan, a part of the Kham region.

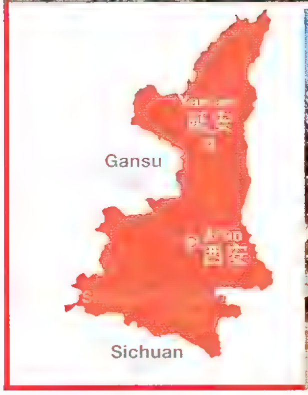
3. The tools used by Tibetan knife craftsmen are almost the same with the tools used by forgers. For example: anvil, furnace, hammer, bellows and so on.

Yan’an

The Red Capital

Photos • Chen Tuanjie Article • Stone

The revolutionary holy land of Yan’an is located on the Loess Plateau in northern Shaanxi Province in northwest China. It served as the cradle of the Communist Party of China’s (CPC) political power, which changed the history of the country. Today, however, this ‘Red Capital’ confronts greater change than it has ever seen before.



There is no doubt that the Loess Plateau is one of the poorest areas in the world. Though the area is blessed with a thick layer of yellow earth, it suffers sever drought, especially in spring, when farmers see barely a single raindrop for several months. As a result, the land cracks, forming deep gullies and leaving it with poor vegetation. In summer, when a bumper harvest seems to come, a storm may destroy all the crops in one or two hours. Even worse, the following flood may wash away the fertile soil as well as a farmer's year's worth of hard work.

Though Yan'an was never the capital of a nation, its footprint on the pages of history looms large. In these peaceful times, it seemed to have been forgotten, but its mountains and gullies remain as witnesses to one of the most crucial periods in modern Chinese history.

From Border Town to Red Capital

Yan'an became known as Red Capital in the 1930s when a disheveled band of travelers arrived here and set up a communal society that was to change the course of Chinese history forever.

In the chilly winter of 1935, a group of educated people headed by Mao Zedong (1893—1976) and Zhou Enlai (1898—1976) led the Red Army, an army of 100,000 peasants from the south, on the 25,000 km Long March. When the troupe arrived at a wild gully in the suburbs of Yan'an, after all kinds of hardships and setbacks, only several thousand men were left, hungry and in rags.

Yan'an was under the control of the national army at that time. The Red Army from the south had to fight guerilla wars in the surrounding areas of Yan'an, with the support of Liu Zhidan, leader of the local peasant revolution. On the one hand, they hid from the government's efforts to eradicate them; on the other hand, they attacked the rich and delivered their wealth to the poor, so as to get space and food for their own survival. When the first hard year was finally over, the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Kuomintang, who had been struggling against each other for a decade, agreed to form a coalition to fight against the Japanese invasion (this agreement was later called the Xi'an Incident). Kuomintang General Zhang Xueliang retreated from Yan'an and on December 17, 1936, the vanguards of the Red Army entered the city. On January 13, 1937, Mao Zedong crossed the frozen Yanhe River and reached the city gate of Yan'an, which was at that time the

中國工農紅軍陝北工
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most prosperous town in northern Shaanxi. Mao stayed there for 10 years until he left on March 18 1947.

The Red Army utilized Yan'an to rest and revitalize. In fact Yan'an was the womb that nurtured China's Communist administration. For the first-generation of CPC members, Yan'an is a holy land to which many owe their lives and positions.

Three Visits to the Revolutionary Holy Land

During the "cultural revolution" of the 60s~70s of last century, Yan'an was a place as attractive to young people as New York and Paris today.

In the past 20 years, I have paid three visits to the red capital. The first time was before the Spring Festival of 1984, when Yan'an was almost as rustic as it was during the Red Army period. I have a vivid memory of a rural market set up on the frozen bank of the Yanhe River. The peasant shoppers, who were preparing commodities to celebrate the Chinese New Year, formed a blackish float. I went there for the second time in November 1994, about 10 years later. On that visit the city seemed to be undergoing a facial. High buildings were rising up; commodities from all parts of the country were available in the cave shops; and environmental pollution was getting worse. Standing on the top of the Baota (Treasure Pagoda) Hill, I saw a belt of black smoke hang above the valley; and the water of Yanhe River was muddy.

I paid my third visit to Yan'an in the summer of 2005. I walked along the flourishing streets, but could not find any trace of the former Yan'an. In many ways, Yan'an might be easily mistaken for another big city such as Xi'an. Nevertheless, after 10 years of opening and absorbing foreign investment, I realized that Yan'an still remained as the "red capital". The local government has began to renovate the former residences of the CPC leaders and related historical sites. On a slope, a stone cave hotel was built. Fortunately, the traditional local folklore, like *Yangge* and Waist Drum dance, have been saved from deafening rock and roll.

During my first visit to Yan'an, I walked through the market on the riverbank and encountered a group of senior citizens enjoying sunshine on the beach. They all wore padded coats made of home-woven black cloth, and on their heads were the same style of white towels, except a few who had old-fashioned hats. I guessed they were about 70~80 in age. They pointed at the river and told me many stories. One

1. An overview of Yan'an: Pagoda Hill, situated in the central area, serves as the city's landmark. It was built in the Ming Dynasty and reconstructed several times in the Qing Dynasty, so its outer eaves are built in Qing architectural style.

2. Zaoyuan (Date Garden), where Mao Zedong had lived for more than two years.

3. A huge picture of Mao Zedong is provided at Yongjialing for visitors to take photos.

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said Chairman Mao often took a walk on the riverside and when he came across an old peasant, always asked him about his daily life. The Red Army and the later Eighth Route Army trained by the river, and the soldiers also watered their horses and washed clothes in the river. In those years, young students and intellectuals flooded in to Yan'an from all over the country.

From Phoenix Hill to Yangjialing

When I came back in the early winter of 1994, most of the men in the group had passed away. Uncle Wu, the youngest among them and the only one alive, was 80. His home was in Yangjialing. He told me that the former residences of Chairman Mao Zedong, Premier Zhou Enlai and other leaders had been renovated and opened to the public; the caves where President Liu Shaoqi and General Peng Dehuai once lived were also open for exhibition. Those historical sites looked very much like what they used to be.

I left the old man and visited several such former residences. All of them were either in downtown Yan'an or in gullies. The city itself is built on a mountain: its streets and commercial centres are all in gullies. The difference is that some of the gullies are wide and others narrower.

I first visited the CPC Central Committee's Office at the foot of Phoenix Hill. Though the hill has a beautiful name, it is barren. The Red Army established their Advisory Department here after they entered Yan'an. Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De (1886—1976) and other leaders also lived in the courtyard. A year later, the rebellion army was reorganized into the Eighth Route Army, as part of the national army. In November 1938, the leaders moved to Yangjialing in the northern section of Yan'an, three kilometers from Phoenix Hill.

When I was walking in the spacious valley of Yangjialing, the first structure that came to my sight was the Central Auditorium. During the campaign of rectification, which focused on catching "spies" from the ranks of the revolutionaries, many important meetings were held in this hall. It was also here that Mao Zedong apologized to wronged students and intellectuals. The auditorium also served as the dancing room for the CPC leaders. It is said that Zhou Enlai and Zhu De were the best dancers, possibly because both had studied in Europe. By some reports, Mao Zedong was not good at dancing — when he danced, it was said, he looked like he was walking by the Yanhe River! In the most difficult years of the War of Resistance Against Japan, Yan'an provided a peaceful settlement area for many anti-Japanese heroes. By contrast, Chongqing, the then temporary capital of China under the control of the Kuomintang, suffered bombing by Japanese airplanes almost every day.

Mao Zedong's Former Residence is situated on the slope to the right of the auditorium. In a small and simple courtyard, there are three cave rooms built

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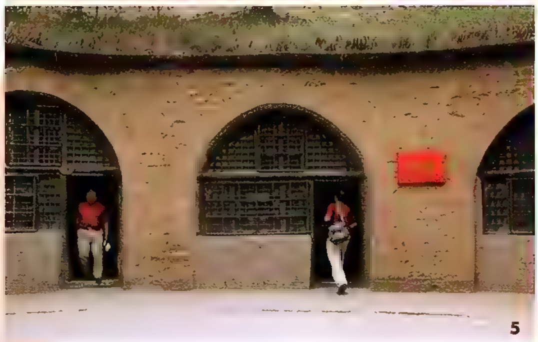
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against the hill; the one in the middle was his office and that on the left was the bedroom of Mao and his wife Jiang Qing (1914—1991). A door connects the two caves. Another cave was for Mao's secretary. Liu Shaoqi, who later became the chairman of the People's Republic of China, was Mao's neighbour. Other leaders, such as Zhou Enlai and Zhu De, all resided nearby Mao's place in Yangjialing.

In 1942, Mao Zedong and other leaders moved to Zaoyuan (Date Garden), about eight kilometres northwest of Yan'an. They lived there for five years, until they left Yan'an in March 1947 when the Kuomintang troupes reached the Red Capital.

Revolutionary Leaders Worshipped

When I visited Yan'an for the third time in 2005, I first visited Qingliang Mountain. I climbed halfway up the mountain where the Ten-Thousand Buddha Cave is situated. This Buddhist cave was dug in the Northern Song Dynasty and though not big in size, the stone sculpture of Sakyamuni was excellent. Unfortunately, many Buddhist carvings on the walls have been beheaded by vandals and the big statue is also a reconstruction. Nearby is the Memorial Hall to Fan Zhongyan, a famous Northern Song Dynasty minister. At the top of the mountain there is the Temple of Emperor Zhenwu. During the temple fair held once a year here as many as 100,000 pilgrims from counties under Yan'an's jurisdiction came to worship Emperor Zhenwu. At this lively event, the whole Qingliang Mountain crowds with people. Amazingly, the older local people worshipped the revolutionary leaders as gods too. Small temples were built in villages and were named Hall of Three Saints. In the hall, clay sculptures in the images of Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Zhu De respectively were enshrined. Obviously, the statues were made by amateurs; their features are not accurate, some of them even look a little odd, but they demonstrate the local farmers' respect for the three great men.

A Discussion of World Affairs on Baota Hill

After coming down Qingliang Mountain, I climbed Baota (Pagoda) Hill on the opposite side. The hill has become famous because of the pagoda built on the peak. According to the stone tablet, the original pagoda was built in the Tang Dynasty (618—907) and the one existing today was rebuilt in the Ming Dynasty (1368—1644). Pagoda Hill served as the landmark of the red capital. On my way up the hill, I met an elderly man herding two goats who stated as a greeting "You've come for a visit." When I asked why he was herding only two goats, he said the government had launched a plan to turn the fields on the hill into forests and grasslands. Pointing at the downtown area of Yan'an, he said that in the previous years, the city dwellers used coal stoves, whose smoke covered Yan'an in a black veil. It was so dusty that people dared not open their windows. Today, oil

1. In the Central Auditorium, a clerk in revolutionary clothing narrates a story about the Seventh CPC National Congress.

2. A picture of Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai taken in Yan'an.

3. These photos take visitors back to the revolutionary years.

4. The statue of Mao Zedong in front of the Yan'an Revolution Memorial Museum.

5. The former residence of Zhou Enlai at Yangjialing, a typical northern Shaanxi cave dwelling.

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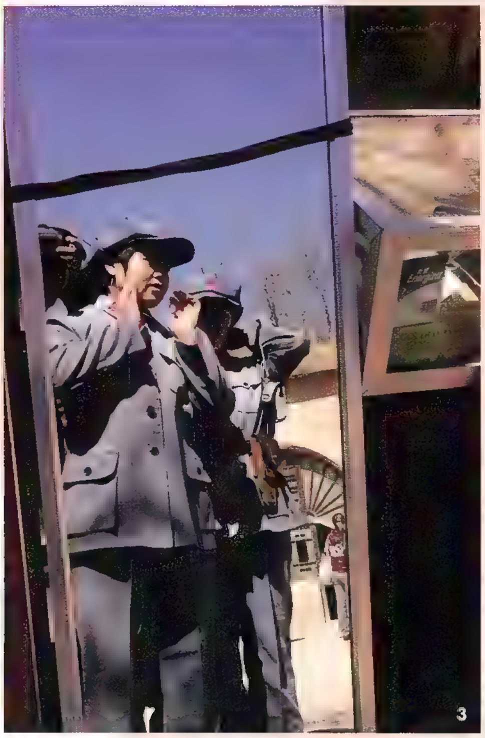

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and gas had been discovered in the surrounding areas and coal consumption had dropped. The air had become much cleaner and city revenue had increased remarkably. People's lives, of course, had improved a lot.

At dusk, Mr. Li, the elderly man, walked down the hill with me. He talked about how great he thought Mao Zedong was, and the last thing he will remember in his life was the land reform movement which Mao launched. Li's family was one of the poorest in the village and, overnight, they became self-sufficient farmers with about a hectare of land. "Chairman Mao changed the fate of my family," he told me. "The young people's beliefs are strange. They prefer to pursue singers and movie stars rather than listen to what great men and the older people say. They don't want to stay home to do farming; instead, they travel to the prosperous cities." He sighed, but the sound was too weak to make any change.

What the Young People Say

I took a train back to Xi'an. Opposite to my sleeper bunk was a young man of about 30, surnamed Feng. When we started chatting, I told Feng what the herdsman said. He laughed, saying people of that generation will probably live with their nostalgic ideas until they die. According to Feng, it is true that Yan'an occupies an important position in Chinese history and was once world famous in the 1930s~40s, especially after the reports of foreign journalists who visited Yan'an. But its historical role is over and the focus has turned to Beijing and Shanghai. While some of the local youngsters choose to stay home and develop the town, others go to Xi'an, Beijing, Shanghai, or even overseas to pursue

4

1. This woman has worked in the Date Garden Museum for 30 years and admires Chairman Mao

2. Visitors can put on Red Army suits and have a taste of the Red Army lifestyle

3. Taking a picture in Red Army suits

4. Some farmers from other towns live in rented caves at the foot of the Baota Hill at the cost of 60 yuan per month.

a career. Many Yan'an residents send their children to schools in Xi'an, some of them even have bought properties there. Feng became excited in the end. "Why shouldn't we, the Yan'an natives, leave this barren loess and find a way of living in a different place? Why shouldn't we enjoy a brilliant life and make our lives more valuable?" he asked.

Translated by Gloria Shang

Tips for the Traveller

Transport

Flight

1. There are flights between Beijing and Yan'an on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday departing at 11:15 and arriving at 12:45. Fare: 850 yuan; from Yan'an to Beijing, the flight departs at 13:25 and arrives at 14:55.

2. There are daily flights between Xi'an and Yan'an departing at 09:24 from Xi'an and arriving in Yan'an at 10:20. The return flight departs at 10:50 from Yan'an and arrives in Xi'an at 11:30. Fare: 380 yuan.

Train:Train 4762 departs from Xi'an at 22:10 and arrives at Yan'an at 07:29 the next morning; for the return journey, take train 4761, departing at 22:27 and arriving in Xi'an at 06:23 the next morning. Fares: 116 yuan (soft sleeper), 73 yuan (hard sleeper), 31 yuan (seat).

From Beijing, train T43/6 departs at 21:03, stops in Xi'an at 08:39 the next morning, and arrives in Yan'an at 13:41; for the return journey, take T45/4 which departs at 16:03 from Yan'an, and reaches Xi'an and Beijing at 20:50 and 8:41 respectively. Fares: 500 yuan (soft sleeper), 320 yuan (hard sleeper). The railway station is 3 km from downtown Yan°Øan and is serviced by bus and taxi.

Long Distance Bus:

1. Long-distance buses depart from the Xi'an East Bus Station to Yan'an. The bus station is located at 17 Changle Road Central, and can be reached by many city buses, including No. 4, 11, 13, 43, 105, 203 and 502. Tel: (29) 8252 5048

2. Between 6:30 to 17:30 luxury coaches depart Xi'an every 30 minutes to Yan'an; the journey takes seven hours. Daytime journeys are recommended to enjoy the stunning landscape along the way.

Accommodation

1. Yan'an Tourism Building

Add: Yan'an Avenue crossroad

Tel: (911) 213 8666

Well equipped with a restaurant serving local dishes, gymnasium, sauna, cafe, and so on. Rates are 560 yuan for a standard room, 680 yuan for a luxury room and 880 yuan for a suite.

2. [illegible]

Add: North section of the Main Street of Yan'an

Tel: (911) 211 3122

This three-star hotel used to be a reception house of the government and features traditional houses, quiet environment and is close to Mao's former residence on Phoenix Hill. A standard room costs 580 yuan.

3. [illegible]

Add: Central Street of Baota District, Yan'an

Tel: (991) 211 3691

Features a local restaurant and a recreational hall. Rates are 180 yuan for a standard room, 380 yuan for a luxury room and 180 yuan for standard room for three.

4. [illegible]

Add: Baimi Road, Dongguan, Yan'an

Tel: (911) 221 9503

A unique hotel in which all the guestrooms are caves with arched roofs. A standard room costs 168 yuan.

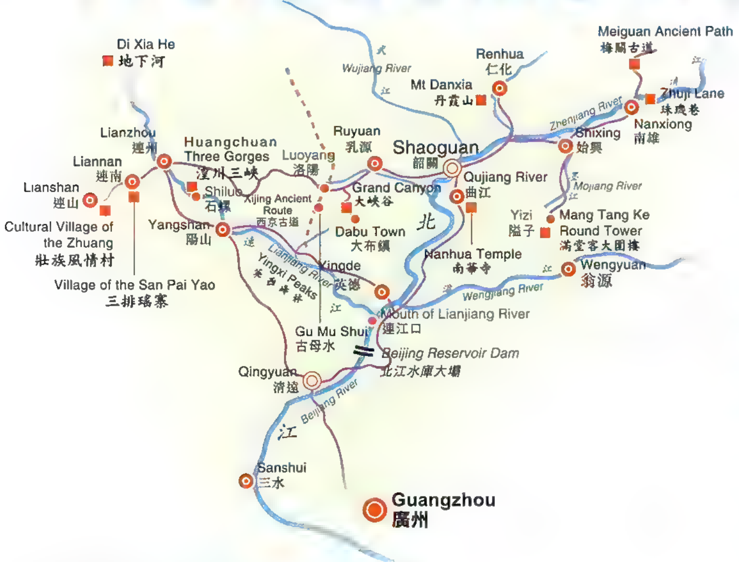
Local Dishes

Oil pancake, cold rice noodles, stir-fried pancake slivers, buckwheat noodles, mutton soup, bun with fruit stuffing, pumpkin with honey, black bean chips.

Yan'an Tourism Building (by Joseph Ma)

Worrisome Beijiang River

Photos & Article • Stone


Di Xia He
地下河
Meiguan Ancient Path
梅關古道
Renhua
仁化
Wujiang River
Mt Danxia
丹霞山
Zhuji Lane
珠璣巷
Zhenjiang River
Nanxiong
南雄
Shixing
始興
Lianzhou
連州
Huangchuan Three Gorges
湟川三峽
Luoyang
洛陽
Ruyuan
乳源
Shaoguan
韶關
Liannan
連南
Lianshan
連山
Shiluo
石螺
Xijing Ancient Route
西京古道
Grand Canyon
大峽谷
Qujiang River
曲江
Mojiang River
Cultural Village of the Zhuang
壯族風情村
Yangshan
陽山
Dabu Town
大布鎮
北
Yizi
隘子
Mang Tang Ke Round Tower
滿堂客大圍樓
Nanhua Temple
南華寺
Lianjiang River
Yingxi Peaks
英西峰林
Yingde
英德
Wengyuan
翁源
Wengjiang River
Village of the San Pai Yao
三排瑤寨
Mouth of Lianjiang River
連江口
Gu Mu Shui
古母水
Beijing Reservoir Dam
北江水庫大壩
Qingyuan
清遠
Beijiang River
江
Sanshui
三水
Guangzhou
廣州

Map for Beijiang River

The Zhujiang, or Pearl River, is the largest body of water in southern China. With three major tributaries in the east, north and west of China, it is the country's most concentrated waterway system. Originating from the Nanling Mountain ranges running between Central and South China, the Beijiang River is the name given to the entire water system of northern Guangdong Province. The area is currently undergoing numerous changes — some pleasing, but others worrying.

I made my way through downtown Shaoguan, a city located in northern Guangdong Province, early one evening this year. The city is divided into three parts by the Zhenjiang and Wujiang rivers (two tributaries of the Beijiang River). Although I'd been here three years before, I was still amazed by the busy metropolis of neon-lit skyscrapers that spread before me; the speed of development in southern China was impressive indeed. As dusk fell, I was captivated by the sparkling Zhenjiang River. With fairy lights shining on the river's slow-moving surface, it resembled brilliantly coloured Chaozhou silk brocade. According to passers-by, the commercial streets across the Zhenjiang River came alive at night. I crossed the bridge to find shops and vendors doing a roaring trade on streets so well lit it may as well have been daytime. Crowds swished around like schools of fish. Everything imaginable was for sale, and gourmet foods from around the country were available for the tasting. I marvelled at the bustling riverside city.

Harmful Harvest

Could anyone have predicted the accident that occurred on December 2005 at a Shaoguan smelter? A volume of cadmium 10 times the legal limit flowed straight into the Zhenjiang River. The environmental protection authorities reported the test results to higher levels of government. All of the cities along the river, including Shaoguan, Qingyuan and Yingde, were advised to close their water plants; farmers along the river were alerted not to drink the river water. Water was released from major reservoirs to dilute the polluted Beijiang River. This accident and two previous major river pollution incidents — affecting the Songhua River in Northeast China's Heilongjiang Province and the Tuojiang River in Sichuan Province brought the issue of water pollution to the public's attention.

By chance, I found myself sitting next to someone from Shaoguan's science and technology bureau on a bus to Meiguan. He explained that cadmium is a silver (or bluish-white) lustrous nonferrous metal, eye-

1. Beijiang River is not only an important branch of the Zhujiang River, but also a migratory route for the central dwellers.

catching but very harmful to human health. If cadmium-polluted river water reaches the rice paddies, it will be absorbed by the grains. People who eat the rice over a long time will eventually suffer from kidney damage. Other passengers listening to us sighed in frustration. One elderly farmer said, "The rice we eat from our own paddies is irrigated with Beijiang River water. Will we get kidney problems?"

Back to Basics in Shuikou Village

I returned to Shaoguan from Meiguan and boarded the bus to Danxia Mountain, travelling northeast along the Zhenjiang River. After 10 km, I got off at Shuikou (Entrance of the River) Village to visit my friend Heimei (Black Sister). She used to live in Shenzhen, but after she retired a few years ago she and some friends rented a deserted school in Shuikou Village on the banks of the Zhenjiang. There they started a reclusive life in the mountains.

I crossed a small bridge over the Feng Wan River, a branch of the Zhenjiang, passed through some reed bushes, and there, next to a fishpond, I found Heimei waiting for me. Farm life obviously suited her. She looked well and far younger than someone in her 50s. I followed her into the abandoned school, a delightful oasis surrounded by banyan trees and bamboo bushes. The backyard was filled with a variety of vegetables and other plants. Dozens of chickens grazed freely in the yard. The old school building had been divided into bedrooms, a living room and guest rooms. Heimei's husband, Old Yang, had been a district official in Shenzhen. He had retired recently and come to join his wife as a "lord of the land". Lunch was a generous spread of home-grown vegetables and fish from their own pond. Even the preserved cabbage, smoked meat and sausages were homemade. But the fresh pork and chicken came from Shuikou villagers, who sold them at low prices. Heimei confessed that although she kept many chickens, she couldn't bear to kill them and only ate their eggs. Aside from the gas cylinders with which they cook, they boil drinking and bathing water over fires made from dead branches and bamboo. All together, their monthly expenditures are no more than 200 yuan per person.

Suffering Feng Wan River

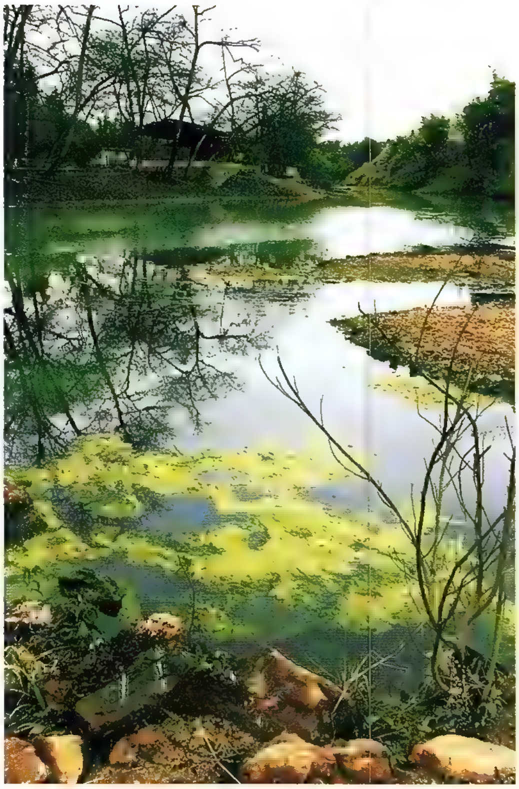
After we ate, I went for a walk along the river with Old Zhang, a retired actor with the local opera crew Cai Cha tea-picking). A light drizzle was falling. As we crossed the village, lovely fishponds appeared among the tall camphor trees and bamboo. After passing through some dense reed bushes, we arrived at the Feng Wan (Maple Bay) River. Old Zhang pointed at this little river, which eventually flows into the Zhenjiang, and said when they first came to live here in 2001, the river water was so clear you could see to the bottom; the river pebbles were clean enough to handle and fondle. But by the end of 2002, the water had become murky and the pebbles

1. The Zhenjiang River flows through the city of Shaoguan — the water is a reflection of our rapid urbanization.

2. Heimei aspires to live a quiet, peaceful pastoral life.

3. In the spring of 2002, Shuikou villagers were still freely drawing water from, swimming in and washing clothes in the Feng Wan River. (by Heimei)

4. Formerly crystal clear Yellow Wave Stream is now a "poisonous river" without any marine life.



were coated in green mud, like toads. He pointed to the rocky shores beneath the small bridge, saying that was where the villagers' drinking water well used to be. The well water had been fresh and sweet. But it turned grimy and smelt of rotten eggs. Then the river's fish and prawns started dying.

Old Zhang reminisced about the early days in Shuikou Village. The little river was particularly charming at sundown. Bathed in the amber light of sunset, the village women stood in the shallow water washing clothes and bed linens, while children splashed around. Water buffalo soaked in the clear water to dodge insect attacks. Fishermen on small boats dropped their prawn and fish nets. Now it is all just a distant memory. One little river has simply disappeared! We later learned that the problem stemmed from a branch of the Feng Wan River called "Huang Lang Shui" , Yellow Wave Stream). An oxalic acid factory owned by Taiwanese businessmen had been set up next to the river. The factory was originally located in downtown Shaoguan, but it moved here when residents there complained about the pollution. The local villagers also brought the matter to the attention of the local environmental protection

authorities. The result: the factory continued to pollute, but the owner offered to dig a new well for Shuikou Village. The first well yielded no water. The next had water that was full of grease, so filters were added until the water was just drinkable. Even now the river water is still dark in colour. So kids no longer swim in it and women don't do their laundry there. If they spend any time in the river, their skin itches for days afterwards.

I followed Old Zhang along the Feng Wan River to the mouth of the Zhenjiang where we saw a boat. Hoping we might want to buy his fish, the boatman brought his sampan ashore. Mr Chen had fished here for years, but was now worried sick about the pollution in the Feng Wan River. It used to be a nice, clean river filled with fish and prawns, he said, but now it was dead water. He and his family have had to leave the village to make a living from the upper reaches of the Zhenjiang.

The accident at the Shaoguan smelter appears to be just the tip of the iceberg regarding local water pollution. As we walked back, Old Zhang became wistful. He said: "We chose Shuikou Village as our oasis, partly to work on the disappearing art of the tea-picking performance, and partly to spend our remaining years in an unspoilt paradise. Now, even paradise has become tainted."

Rooting Out the Problem of Yellow Wave Stream

It continued to rain on the second day. After breakfast, Heimei and her husband drove me to Yellow Wave Stream for a glimpse at the source of the pollution. Yellow Wave Stream is a 10-km long

river set in a small village that originated from a volcano. We were on the road to Danxia Mountain for about three minutes when we turned onto a narrow track. After two kilometres, we came to a factory. The sign said "So and So Industries", but there was no clue as to what it actually produced. It wasn't very large but it sat right next to a small reservoir in the mid-reaches of Yellow Wave Stream. The polluting pipes appeared to be hidden at the bottom of the dam, leaving those not in the know no wiser. But the water in the reservoir and along the lower reaches of the water was a murky green. In particular the stream beneath the embankment was not only a dubious colour, but moss was also floating on its surface, and darker substances could be seen lower down in the water. A woman we met on the way said the factory had recently suspended operations, perhaps fearing investigations into the Shaoguan affair.

We kept walking towards the upper reaches of Huang Lang Shui. About three kilometres from the factory, the river was a more natural colour and much clearer. We could even see small fish swimming in the water. That meant that without the factory's pollution, Yellow Wave Stream and the Feng Wan River could quickly return to normal. The wells and springs near the river would still be full of clean water. The children could play in the water again and the women could wash their laundry in the river. The delicate balance of man and nature could be restored.

Mojiang River — Torn Apart

It was two days before I returned to Meiguan. In the morning, I took the shuttle bus to the town of Yizi. On the way, I discovered more lakes. At the time, I was walking south, away from Mojiang Stream, a branch of the Zhenjiang. The quiet, lushly forested valley was dotted with just a few villages. I saw a beautiful lake set in the valley. The still surface of the water reflected the riverside pines and red foliage; the brilliant colours of the branches "mirrored" perfectly by the water were beautiful. After we turned round a hill, another lake appeared. It was only then that I saw the embankment at one end of the lake and the building next to it: a "hydroelectric power station". These man-made lakes were being used to generate electricity. I had heard a few days before on my way to the Ruyuan Canyons that it was all the rage for private investors to build hydropower plants. As long as they have the money, they can apply for patents and build embankments in the valleys to generate power, and then sell it to the state grids. It's a rather lucrative business.

But the nature of the river streams and the ecosystems are destroyed by these "profitable" projects. Water is only kept fresh when it is running; fish can only reproduce in currents; tree species die out when water drowns entire forests...but because of greed, these basic "laws of water" have been ignored.

Once Dangerous Waterway Now

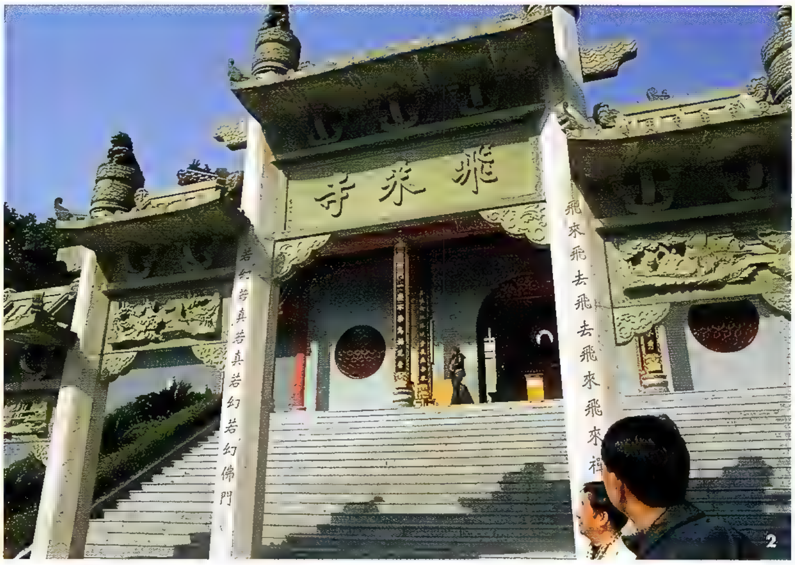
From the town of Yizi we passed Xiaokeng and went to Qujiang. We then headed back to Shaoguan before taking the bus to Pingshi along the Wujiang

1. The Beijiang River is not completely polluted; wind-dried fish are still for sale here.

2. Dams cut off the river and become a profit source — whether generating hydropower or breeding aquatic products.

3. The riverside wet market is another source of pollution.

4. The Qingyuan Environmental Protection Bureau collects water samples from the Beijiang River hourly to monitor water quality.



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River. The Wujiang, a major branch of the Beijiang River, starts deep in the Nanling Hills. Because it flows through less urbanized areas with few factories, the water quality here is much better than that of the Zhenjiang. At "Nine Rapids and 18 Ponds" Jiu Long Shiba Tan) located on the upper reaches of the Wujiang and favoured by white-water rafting enthusiasts, the water is still clean, almost unpolluted.

The once arduous waterways of "Nine Rapids and 18 Ponds" have been replaced by roads and railways, so it now serves as a form of entertainment, providing rafting thrills to city dwellers in search of adventure. We really do get full use of the river: we drink its water; use it for washing and irrigation; sail boats on it; entertain on it; and even use it to change the way we feel!

Tourists are scarce in winter. Because of the cold and the low water levels, rafting is impossible at this time of year. We got stuck for two hours soon after we left Pingshi due to traffic congestion. From Shaoguan I changed buses to Yingde, travelling along the old roads. Lone peaks typical of Guilin's karst topography appeared in the distance, as if we'd arrived in Guangxi Province.

Sink or Swim

The Beijiang River expands at Yingde, drawing together branches including the Wujiang, Zhenjiang, Rujiang (Nanshui River) and Wengjiang rivers. It was tremendous by the time we reached the mouth of the Lianjiang River. After Zhenyang Gorge where the Beijiang joins the Lianjiang (also dubbed the Little Beijiang), the water was clear, its calm surface a blue-green, much like the colour of large lakes. But as we moved along the riverbanks further south, we unexpectedly came upon embankments again. The flow of the Beijiang had been cut off to store water for the supply to Guangzhou, as well as to generate power.

But beneath the Beijiang River embankment was a large expanse of riverbed. The parched rock bed was a jarring sight, a stark contrast to the sparkling aqua water just an embankment away. It was as if we had suddenly stepped into the Gobi Desert.

Thirty kilometres later, I came to Feilai Gorge. While I waited at the jetty, a jeep suddenly appeared. A man got out, walked to the river, collected a bottle of river water, hopped back into the jeep and left.

Others waiting at the jetty said he was from the Qingyuan environmental protection bureau. Someone from the bureau collects and tests the water every hour to monitor the changes in the Beijiang River. It started after the Shaoguan cadmium spill. Even though the incident had occurred over a month before, because residue could still be in the Beijiang River reservoir, there were lingering concerns about the water quality.

As soon as we stepped off the ferry, we were dragged away by vendors on boats. The latest tourism draw card was a boat tour of Feilai temple, with the opportunity to enjoy fresh river produce on the way. First customers select fresh fish and vegetables from a "market" made of boats tied together, then they give their selections to the boat operators before boarding. As the boat sails along slowly, customers are soon served a table filled with food and drink. By the time the boat returns, the revellers are usually well-sated and tipsy.

The ferry arrived at Feilai Temple, deep within Feilai Gorge. I had been here 10 years before, but the temple of old was nowhere to be seen. A new temple had taken its place. Back in 1997, an unusual rainstorm sparked flash flooding that completely destroyed the thousand-year-old temple. Not only did many monks lose their lives in the tragedy, even the

Buddha statue in the Grand Lord Hall was swept to riverbanks miles away along the lower reaches of the Beijiang. The new temple was built with funds donated by patrons and businessmen from Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau. It was a vast improvement over its predecessor. While others burnt incense and offered their respects to the Buddha, I checked out the temple. Its layout and structure made allowances for another possible flood. Only after such painful lessons do we fear nature and realize our own insignificance: man should not resist or alter nature, because sooner or later nature will have its revenge.

Shrinking River in the Setting Sun

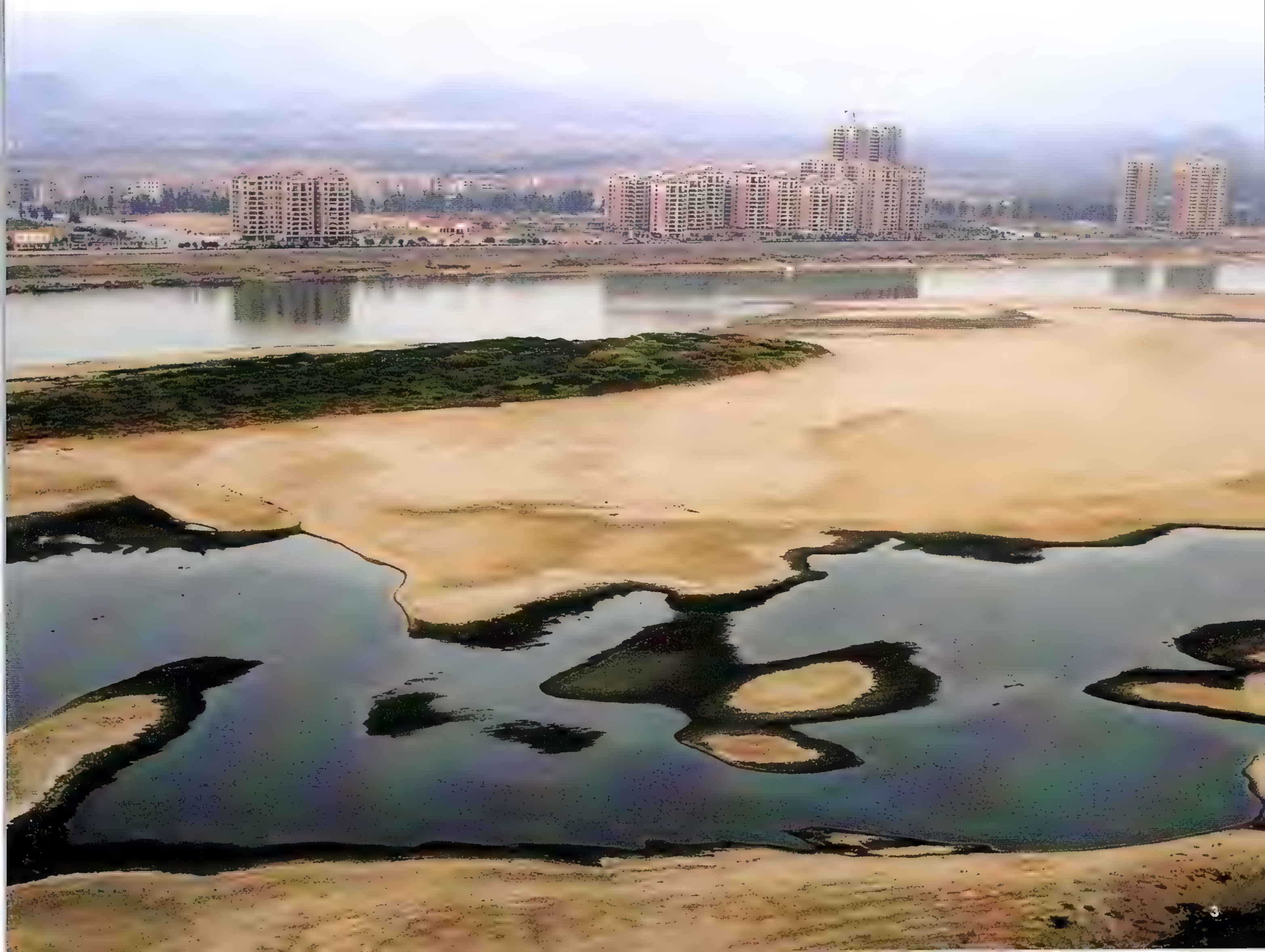
I reached Qingyuan by sunset. I left the coach terminal, but instead of going straight to my lodgings, I took a taxi to the Beijiang River Bridge and walked along the riverbank. I was shocked to see that the river, which had been full of water 10 years ago, was reduced by half. A passer-by said the river had been this way for several years. Since they cut off the river's flow with upstream embankments, the river hasn't been full again, except during the summer rainy season. The water level was now so low it could no longer support boats. I stood on the bridge and looked south through the rapidly fading light; the long-distance cargo ships were concentrated in the lower reaches. Only Sanshui retained the final watercourse of the Beijiang River. The fishing boats were all moored north of the bridge. The fishermen still sold live fish. But an elderly woman said that now that the river had shrunk, the fish population had declined. The river had also started to smell, possibly the result of city buildings expelling too much sewage into the river. About 20 fishing boats were moored on the shallow shoal in the middle of the river, where the fishermen also live. One fisherwoman was washing vegetables in the river, while an old couple knitted fishnets on their boat. Two bamboo poles stood in the shallow water hung with clothes that had just been washed. This meant that the water wasn't quite as bad as that of the Feng Wan River.

In the orange glow of twilight, the river was a poetic sight with the shimmering reflections of boats against the silhouette of riverside buildings, each taller than the next. But those who know about the pollution

1. Feilai Temple in 1996: the ancient monastery was destroyed by a rare flash flood in 1997.

2. The newly built Feilai Temple is of much grander proportions than its predecessor.

3. The build-up of dams along the river has caused a drastic decline in the water level and the widening of the riverbank at the lower reaches of the Beijiang.



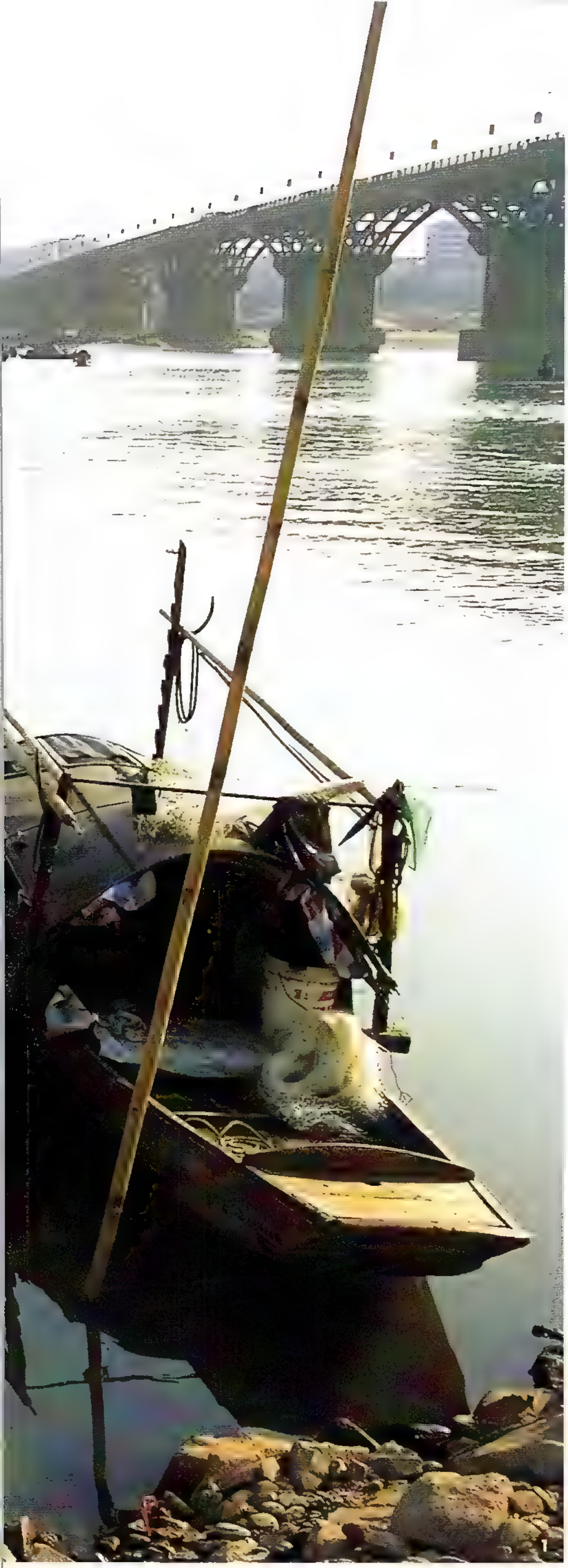
problems are far more concerned about the river than moved by the scenery. Water is a matter of life and death, of prosperity and demise. We should treat it with wisdom and respect.

Beijiang River — A River of History

The Beijiang River flows endlessly in northern Guangdong, while the people there move like a constant stream. Beijiang River has witnessed huge migrations through the ages; the Meiguan (Plum Pass) at the upper reaches of Zhenjiang River acting like "border control" for the migrants from the central region; Zhuji Lane can be likened to a "rest stop" for the migrants. While the passing on of our cultural treasures is also like a river, with sources, flow, branches, as well as the threat of drought, pollution...

Meiguan: Historical Gateway to Migration

The almost three-kilometre-long Meiguan road goes from the bottom of the valley to the ridge of the hill. The ancient road is a tourist attraction because of the abundance of plum blossoms. At the Meiguan pass on the mountain, the ancient gateway was still the same, but the ancient inscription had been newly painted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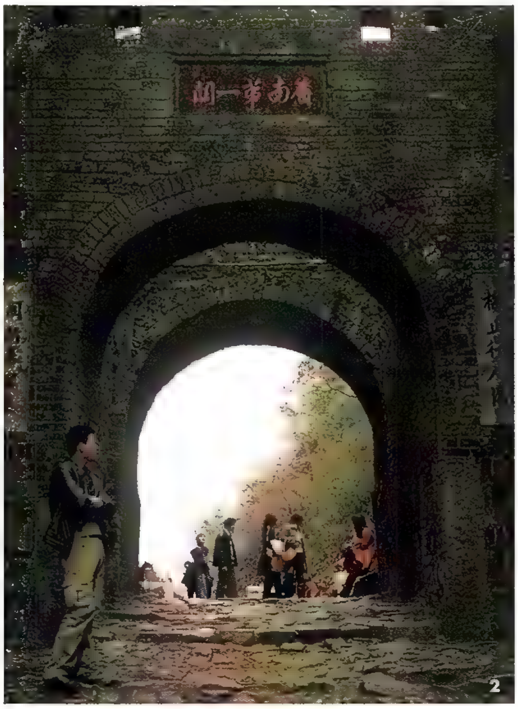
crimson red, as if it were finished just yesterday.

If you look towards the north and south standing in the middle of the arched gateway, you find that the road on the Guangdong side rises slowly along the valley while that in Jiangxi quickly spirals downwards in steep twists. I also discovered that almost all of the plum trees on the Jiangxi side are old; not one was in flower. Just one pass made a huge difference in temperature. The owner of a grocery store on the Jiangxi side told me, Meiling (Plum Hills) actually refers to the north slopes on the Jiangxi side because it's always been covered with plum trees. When I asked him about the exact age of the Meiguan, he said that was hard to determine, by the history books, Zhang Jiuling of the Tang Dynasty had established the Meiguan trade route and built the Zhuji Lane stop, that was at least 1,000 years ago. Officials in historical times appointed to positions in Guangdong or demoted to remote Hainan, usually had to go by the pass at Nanling, famed poet Su Dongpo was an example. Meanwhile, traders came through Meiguan road constantly. In the Qing Dynasty, the trip from Beijing and Guangzhou was almost entirely on boat, only the 40 km section near Meiling was on land. In the pre-communist days, this was still a major trade route. Back then, those using the ancient road outnumbered people in town, especially at night. There were no carts, people walked or rode horses, while the rich and powerful took carriages. On both sides of the old road, hotels, teahouses, bars and groceries abounded, doing business day and night. After roads were built between Jiangxi and Guangdong in the 1950s, the old road quickly lost popularity. Now the villagers very rarely use Meiguan, only tourists come here.

Zhuji Lane: "Shelter from the Storm" for Migrants

Once you get off Meiling, the road travels along Zhenjiang River towards the southwest. Because it's in the same direction as the old road, these roads are also plum tree lined. By the time I got to Zhuji Lane about 20 km away, it was lunchtime, so I ordered some of the famous smoked duck rice at the street side stall — it did not disappoint. I found out from the vendor when we were having tea after the meal that



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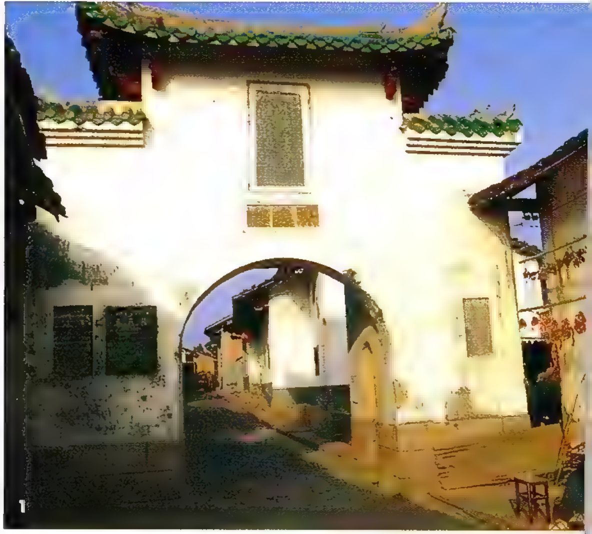
1. The rapidly growing economy and the drive to urbanize have not only modernized the Beijiang River, they have also brought pollution concerns.

2. The Meiguan road allowed business between the southern and inland traders.

he was named Zuping, a descendant of the Dai's family in Zhuji Lane. He says that in the early years of the Southern Song Dynasty, because the Jin army of the north had made their way across the Yellow River, Kaifeng — the eastern capital city had fallen, his ancestors fled from Shangqiu in Henan province to Jiang'nan, then further south to Ganzhou of Jiangxi Province, finally past Meiguan to settle in Zhuji Lane by the Zhenjiang River. The Zhuji Lane of the time — was already a major stop and business hub of Lingnan. Migrants from all over the central regions made their homes here.

Zhuji Lane scenic area had undergone a revamp since my last visit three years ago. A new street was being built on the shore of the Shashui Lake, the 17 new commemorative family halls were each grander than the next, but somehow it seemed shallow, devoid of cultural ambience. In the alley itself, people lead leisurely lives — older people chat with their grandchildren, women sit outside knitting, while others are playing mahjong. Smoked ducks hang on the white walls of the street — below them were booklets on how the hundred surnames came about. These varied surnames all belong to the first settlers here from central China. The smoked duck and the booklet of surnames have become major cultural symbols of the Zhuji Lane.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Aizi Hakka Compound: Castles in Mid-journey

After leaving Zhuji Lane, I passed through

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Nanxiong to get to Shixing. Then after an overnight stay in town, I took the early morning bus to the town of Aizi — upstream on the Mojiang River, a branch of Zhenjiang River.

Aizi, like its name, is an old town set in the pass between two mountains. The mountain creek below the stone bridge was an appalling sight, filled with rubbish; the water was still clear, but its beauty was utterly spoiled.

For five yuan, I was taken to Man Tang Hakka compound on a motorcycle taxi. The grand watchtower style mansion still stood proud and magnificent like an ageing Queen, even after the ravaging effects of time. A young woman and an elderly woman stood inside, volunteering to be my guide, the latter tried to sell me antiques and artworks. When I said I didn't know about antiques, she tried to sell me a brochure about "Man Tang". I gave her a one-yuan coin, but like other elderly farmers in northwestern China, she would only take a note — saying the coin was unreliable.

Eventually, the younger woman agreed to give me a guided tour for 10 yuan. The compound is rectangular, made up of three courtyards. The middle edifice was the tallest and largest, guarded and walled in like a fortress, reminding me of the Bastille prison in France. My guide said that the compound belonged to the Guan family, those who live in the compound now are all descendants surnamed Guan. She married into the Guan family. At the time, the forefather Guan Qianrong took 35 years — from the fifth year of Qing Dynasty's Daoguang period, to the ninth year of the Xianfeng period, to build this castle of "12 yards, nine halls, five entrance halls, 700 rooms". It was an incongruous sight to enter the layers of the compound — which looked old on the outside, and see inside modern amenities like: tiled floors, sofas, TVs, hi-fi equipment.

The locals make their living mainly from timber processing and mushroom farming, because there is not enough farmland. Fir logs were piled on the riverbed, they were being cut into thin sheets to dry on the ground, filling the air with the fragrance of timber. They were probably being made into plywood.

The Guan's who built the Mantang Hakka compound were Hakka people; most people in the town of Aizi were Hakka; in fact, more than half of the people who live in Shaoguan are Hakka people.

The real indigenous people of Guangdong - those who lived here thousands of years ago, should be Maba people of Qujiang, their descendants were the Baiyue people of the Qing Dynasty, or the Zhuang, Li, Buyi people in Guangdong and Guangxi provinces today. If you trace the roots of Hakka, Guangfu, Chaoshan people who live in Guangdong, their ancestors would have lived along the Yellow River or the Yangtze River, they were all "northerners". Take the Hakka people, who originally lived in the mid to lower reaches of the Yellow River, they began their southern ward migration during the "battle of the eight kings" in East Jin period. They moved once again, when the Jin army invaded Kaifeng. After their southern migration, they lived in the mountainous regions at the juncture of Fujian, Jiangxi, Hunan, Guangdong provinces. They have their own distinct dialects, customs and cultures. While the Chaoshan people mostly originated from Henan Province, their forebears came to Fujian in early Tang Dynasty — making their homes in Zhangzhou, Putian regions. Later they migrated to Chaozhou-Shantou area. In comparison, the ancestors of the Guangfu have an even earlier and more complicated composition. Migrants from the north continued to pour in after the Qin Dynasty (221—206 B.C.), especially the "Zhuji Lane migrants" who came during the Song Dynasty, with hundreds of surnames; they assimilated the

1. The ancient lane has kept its historical look.

2. Zhuji Lane residents who make a laidback living from tourism.

3. A thousand year old banyan tree at the ancient bridge outside Zhuji Lane.

4. The clans have all raised money from home and abroad to rebuild their commemorative halls—each bigger and better than the next.

indigenous Baiyue people and their offspring now live all over the Pearl River Delta. That's what makes up the Guangdong population today. There is a pattern to how these three groups of migrants' descendants are distributed in Guangdong: the Hakkas live in the — what strictly speaking should be low altitude mountainous regions; they are mostly farmers — especially tea farmers. By the Qing Dynasty, some Hakka people moved to hilly areas along the coast. The Guangfu live by the water of the Pearl River Delta, they were in fishery, farming and trade; The Chaoshan people live by the seaside in eastern Guangdong; they are mostly in trade and fishery. Then there are those ethnic groups who lead lives of hardship deep in the mountains.

Tea-Picking Opera: Cultural Heritage Is Like a River

I returned to Shuikou Village from Aizi. At sunset, I took a walk with Zhang Chaoqun in the village. As memtioned before, Old Zhang is a well-known tea-picking opera performer in the Shaoguan District. Tea-picking opera started in the Jiulong Mountain tea plantations of southern Jiangxi. Then as the Jiangxi Hakka people moved to Shaoguan, Meizhou, they brought Hakka opera to Guangdong as well. This "imported" opera was then mixed with the local folk songs to become a style on its own. The opera has its roots in the Tang and Song dynasties but it wasn't until the Ming and Qing dynasties that the opera really flourished.

Old Zhang told us that because all traditional operas were banned during the Cultural Revolution, like other regional operas, tea-picking opera also had to be "standardized" according to the allowed "Model Operas". This had led to a bizarre result of Peking opera singing coupled with Hakka dialogue.

But sadly, tea-picking opera is a dying art, because its popularity has waned in the wake of people's preference for modern dance, rock, Canto-pop. Meanwhile the government has cut back subsidies to local theatre troupes. So while city-

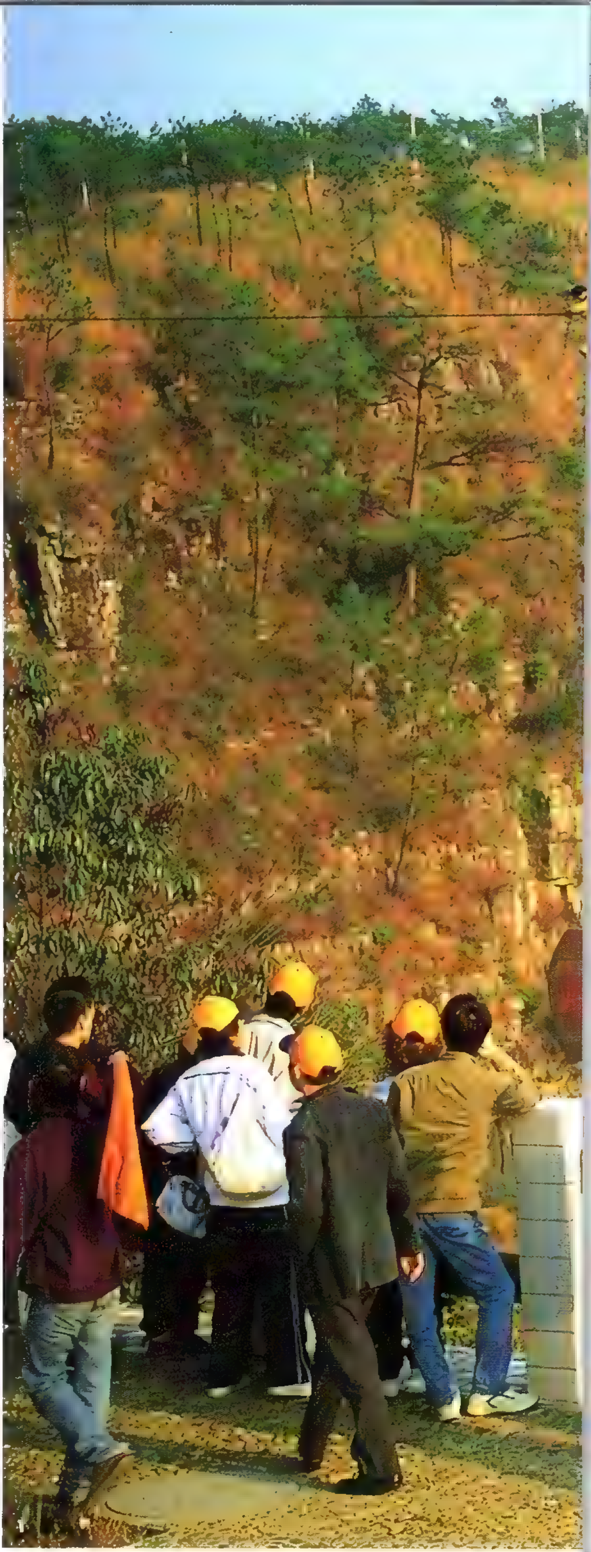
1. Ruyuan Grand Canyon, a result of pre-historic seismic activity.

2. Tea-picking opera performance in the rural areas. (by Heimei)

3. The lushly forested mountains — locals make a living from processing timber. This is made into plywood.

4. Shixing county's Man Tang Hakka compound is a private mansion from the Guan family of the Qing Dynasty.

5. One can still see prawn fishing boats in Lesser Beijiang River.



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dwellers' interests had changed, the farmers still wanted to see old style operas, but the troupes are too cash-strapped to operate.

Old Zhang can't help but become emotional at the situation: "tea-picking opera is part of our cultural heritage that's been around for thousands of years, now it's going to be destroyed by outside influences? It even survived the political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution - but it won't survive the forces of a booming market economy?

To save the opera from extinction, Heimei, Old Zhang and Old Luo are even spending their own pensions to teach the steps and singing style of tea-picking opera to younger actors; sometimes they perform with the Qujiang County Opera Troupe in the rural areas. What is touching is that older villagers walked for miles to see the opera — each time they say, we haven't seen old style opera like this for years, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could see it at least once or twice per month!

At the end of last year, Old Luo, Old Zhang, Heimei and other troupe members performed at Shenzhen with the Qujiang Theatre Troupe. Many Hakka people who live in Shenzhen came to see the folk opera of their hometown; those who weren't Hakka were equally mesmerised. The thunderous applause at the end gave hope to Old Zhang — he was determined to keep "saving" tea-picking opera.

Just like a river, it may run dry during droughts, but there is hope, as long as the source remains.

Grand Canyon: Crevasse Created Beauty

Ruyuan Grand Canyon is at the south of Ruyuan County — which is situated to the west of Shaoguan, on the mountains where it borders Yingde. Ruyuan

means the source of milk — which, like Wengyuan, were all sources of the Beijiang River's branches. I asked locals and was told there used to be a Rujiang River, but now that's been renamed Nanhe Stream.

I took the shuttle from town to grand canyon, the tiny van could only take six or seven people. It was a journey up tall mountains, overlooking deep valleys, the mountain was forested with pines, firs, bamboos, and varnish trees; along the way I saw people cutting weeds and branches with their sickles for firewood. The mountain roads became more treacherous as we went deeper into the mountain, all the villages were tiny, at most with a dozen families, and they had very little land. It looks like the people here have to make do with what produce the mountain can yield. The driver told me that the local speciality was shitake mushrooms, bamboo shoots, white stone that goes into making toothpaste and iron ore. We passed a small village where the farmers here have started tobacco plantations, because they couldn't survive on growing rice.

Then all of a sudden, the viewed brightened and we soon arrived in Dabu Town. It's a modest little town with a few shops and farm animals wandering the streets.

Grand canyon is situated about three kilometres to the south of Dabu Town. One minute you are walking on flat terrain, the next you're at the edge of cliffs facing unfathomable depths. The beginning of the drop is trough shaped, the vertical cliffs go all the way down to the bottom of the grand canyon. Xiao Zeng, a local sixth-grader was our guide, he led us to the bottom of the canyon through steep stone steps, and we hung on to the steel railings for dear life. The canyon is 220 metres deep, with a crevasse in the middle of the top end, through which the river water from Dabu Town falls and forms a waterfall with an unusually large drop. Our sixth-grader guide may be only 13, but he was very knowledgeable. He told us that because Dabu Town is so isolated, it has peculiar laws. Of course, the chance of surviving such a fall is slim indeed.

Huangchuan Three Gorges: Locals' Waterway

Ruyuan and Lianzhou are neighbouring cities — the roads linking them are very good and it took me less than three hours to get to Lianzhou city — which was still "Lianxian" county 10 years ago. Lianzhou is an ancient name — the town was established as early as 183 B.C. during the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.—24). The southwest of Lianzhou borders Liannan Yao Autonomous County and Lianshan

1. Catching a song and dance performance by the Yao people is a must-do for tourists to Lian'nan.

2. Yaoshan Mountain has retained its simple charms.

3. Little Three Gorges on the Little Beijiang River has a charm all its own.

Zhuang Autonomous County. This place is called "Sanlian" (three links). Interestingly, the "Sanlian" region — which is a mountainous part of Nanling, is inhabited by three ethnic groups: the Han, Yao and Zhuang. If you trace back to the beginning, the earliest inhabitants of Lingnan should be the Zhuang people who lived along the lower reaches of Beijiang River. Because the Han government began expanding to the south in the Qin and Han period, some of the aboriginals - the Zhuang, Li and Buyi people had assimilated with the Han's, others were forced to move to poor mountainous areas. The Li people moved to Hainan, while the Buyi and Zhuang people migrated to Guangxi. While the Yao people, along with Guangfu, Hakka, Chaozhou or Teochow people are also "outsiders", they used to live in Henan, Hebei and Shandong - along the mid to lower reaches of the Yellow River, later they moved to the Yangtze River region, around the time of the Tang Dynasty they migrated to the mountains of northwestern Guangdong. The Yao people took a similar migratory route to the Hakka, they lived close to the Hakka as well.

I observed the villagers at Lianzhou Sanpai Yao Village, they did look different from the Zhuang people of Lianshan, or even the Buyi people of Guangxi, and the Li people of Hainan, in fact, they resembled the Hakka people in looks. After three days in Sanlian, I boarded a boat at the Longchuan Shui wharf in east Lianzhou, it took us less than thirty minutes to get to the Huangchuan three gorges of Lianjiang. Although much smaller than the Three Gorges of the Yangtze River, Huangchuan makes up for what it lacks in size in rocky cliffs and crystal clear water. The first gorge is called Longquan or dragon well gorge, where more than a dozen waterfalls hang from the near vertical cliffs on both sides. Boats are berthed at the end of the "goat jump" gorge, the boatman's wife served us lunch in the cabin. Dining on fresh river produce surrounded by the natural sights outside was a rare treat.

The boatman was surnamed Duan, he's a Zhuang native of Lianshan. He said if he had the time, he'd like to take the boat down south all the way to Shiluo Town of Yangshan County, there are superb views of canyons and gorges. Once out of Yangshan, you're in the Yingde Mountains Scenic Area, which looks just like Guilin. Then finally you reach the mouth of the Lianjiang River, where it enters the Beijiang River. He reminisced, "20 years ago, I used to take the boat from Lianzhou to the mouth of the Lianjiang River, then go along Beijiang River, past Qingyuan to Sanshui, then go from Panyu to Zhujiang, past Humen to Shenzhen, Zhuhai, it was a very convenient route. Now that route's gone, because of the Feilaixia hydropower plant on the Beijiang River."

The route that Duan still remembers was the ancient water course that linked Lianzhou with Guangfu, it was also part of the Xijing ancient route that started in the Han Dynasty I guess this would have been one of the routes taken by the Zhuang people who were forced to migrate deep into the mountains. It's fascinating to look back in time, like the northerner migrants to Zhuji Township, who came to the prosperous Pearl River Delta region on bamboo rafts along the Beijiang River; while the indigenous Baiyue people left their homelands to travel upstream along the Beijiang River to hide in the mountains. Through some twists in the hands of Fate, some people came up the river, others came down. The history of mankind is just like the rivers' constant ebb and flow.

Translated by Cheng Lei

Travel Tips

Transportation

Bus: Shenzhen Luohu Port – Shaoguan, hourly services depart from 7 a.m.; there are corresponding return buses from Shaoguan bus terminal to Luohu Port.

Train: T354, departs from Shenzhen at 09:23, arrives in Shaoguan at 13:18; return by the T353. Departs Shaoguan at 11:00, arrives in Shenzhen at 14:52. There are also daily return trains between Shaoguan and Hong Kong's Hung Hum station.

Accommodation

Shaohua Hotel No. 162 Jiefang Lu, Shaoguan; downtown area, close to bus and train stations Tel: (751) 888 1870 3 star Standard room: 160 yuan

Yuetong Hotel Next to Shaoguan train station; next to the bus terminal
Tel: (751) 822 9944 3 star Standard room: 150 yuan

Yuelai Hotel To the south of the Shaoguan train station square; next to the bus terminal
Tel: (751) 822 2333 3 star Standard room: 180 yuan

Ruyuan Xiaodao Hotel No. 2 Jiefang Beilu, Ruyuan County; in the city centre
Tel: (751) 538 9888 3 star Standard room: 150 yuan

Nanxiong Zhuji Hotel No. 12 Jianshe Lu, Nanxiong; in the city centre
Tel: (751) 383 0888 3 star Standard room: 180 yuan

Mount Danxia Hotel Mount Danxia Scenic Area, Renhua County; serene natural surroundings Tel: (751) 629 1130 2 star Standard room: 120 yuan

Lianzhou Hotel No.218, Renmin Lu, Lianzhou; downtown area;
Tel: (751) 662 3990 2 star Standard room: 120 yuan

Suggested Itinerary

Five-day trip:
Day 1: Hong Kong→Shenzhen →Shaoguan→Mount Danxia, stay overnight at Mount Danxia;
Day 2: Meiguan→Zhuji Lane→Aizi Mantang Hakka compound→stay overnight at Shaoguan;
Day 3: Shaoguan→Ruyuan grand canyon→Lianzhou→Underground river →overnight in Lianzhou;
Day 4: Lianzhou→Liannan Sanpai Yao Village→Lianshan Zhuang Folk Village→Huangchuan Three Gorges→stay overnight in Qingyuan;
Day 5: Qingyuan→Hong Kong.

Two-day trip:
Day 1: Hong Kong→Shaoguan→Mount Danxia, stay overnight at Mount Danxia;
Day 2: Mount Danxia→Meiling→Zhuji Lane→Shaoguan→Hong Kong

3

1. The magnificent Nanling ranges, is not just the source of the Beijiang River, but also home to the Hakka and Yao people.

2. An old man of Yao ethnicity.

3. Nanhua Zen Temple — the ancestral birthplace of the southern sect of Buddhism.

Hainan Retreat

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You may have revelled in the tropical charms of Bali, Cebu, Phuket, Sabah and the Maldives, but China also boasts top-quality resorts, captivating blue skies and tropical beaches - and all at a much lower cost - in Hainan Province.

One sunny day when I could no longer bare the thought of working overtime again, I decided to go away, even if it was only for three or four days. Some friends suggested Hainan Island, as local airlines are constantly promoting package trips there. The flight from Hong Kong to Hainan was less than an hour, about the same amount of time it took me to travel from my home to the airport!

Hello, Sanya!

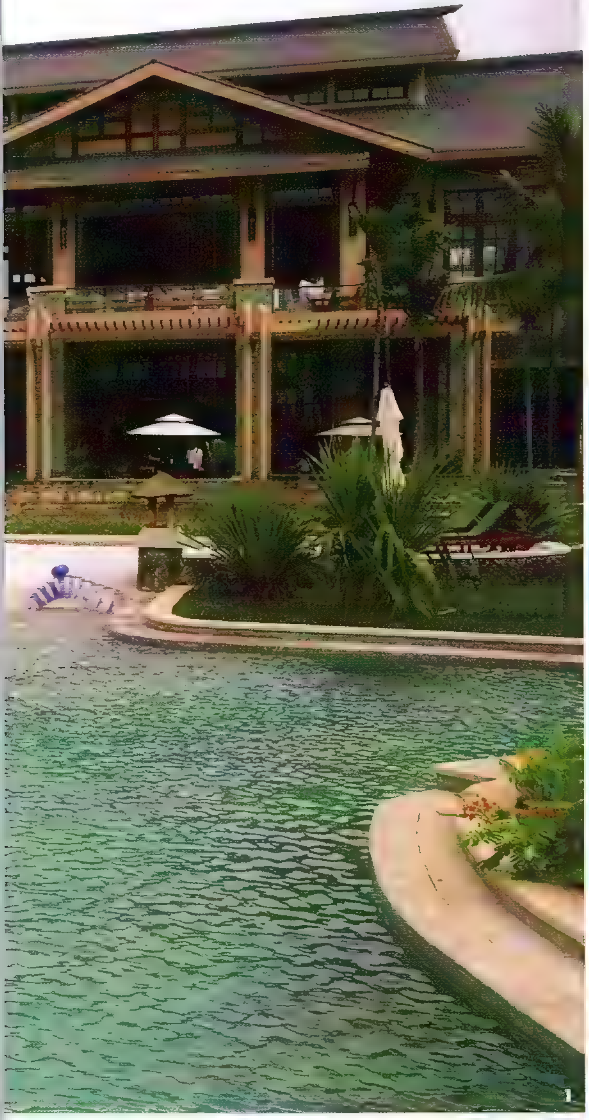
Sanya, the southernmost city on Hainan, is also in the warmest part of the province. My friend and I left Hong Kong on a misty and extremely humid April day and arrived to a temperature of 32°C. After settling in at the hotel, we took a boat to Xidao (West Island), a water-sport paradise, for an afternoon of diving. A committed diver, my friend praised the

1. The Hilton Sanya Resort & Spa boasts an outdoor man-made sand beach, where guests can enjoy sun-bathing without going to a real beach.
2. Large bathtub offered with an endless seaview is a feature of the Yalong Bay Mangrove Tree Resort.
3. Xidao (West Island) — a paradise for beach lovers.

waters of Xidao as even clearer than those of Cebu in the Philippines. We tried motor-boating, paragliding and snorkelling. But my favourite activity was simply sitting under a parasol, watching the other holidaymakers, and sampling dish after dish of fresh fruit until sunset.

A Feast of Five-Star Hotels

Hainan has every reason to be proud of its five-star hotels. A string of prestigious establishments lines the coast of Yalong Bay and each caters to a particular kind of traveller. Whatever your reason for visiting Hainan, there will be at least one hotel perfectly suited to your needs. Had I been able to stay longer, I would have spent a night in each one, provided the budget allowed it.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Nanshan Buddhist Site

The next morning we grabbed a taxi to the Nanshan (South Mountain) Buddhist Culture Site, before heading north to Boao. Although I am not a Buddhist, I love to listen to the music, as it calms the soul. From the main hall of the Nanshan Temple, we could overlook the three-faced statue of Hai Shang Guanyin (Bodhisattva of the Sea). According to the guide, it stands 108 metres tall, with each metre representing a different worry in our lives. Many pilgrims come here to write their wishes on colourful strips of cloth or burn incense to pray for the Bodhisattva's protection. Afterwards, we enjoyed a vegetarian banquet at the temple. A light breeze topped off a cheerful and peaceful afternoon.

Water Ballet in the Rain

Rain fell in the afternoon, a nice, cooling gift, though it was slightly inconvenient for taking pictures. Still, we had a chance to play golf at a course close to the Boao Forum Asian Conference site. In the evening we feasted on a delicious seafood buffet at the hotel's restaurant, accompanied by live piano tunes, most of them theme songs from famous Japanese and Korean films. But the water ballet performed by a group of Russian women stole the show. They performed in spite of the rain, beginning at 8 p.m. sharp. We were even able to watch them from the balconies of our rooms.

"Hot Spring Fish" Kisses

On the next morning when we were on the way to Haikou, the final stop of our tour, my friend told me that the hotel we were staying in was famous for its hot spring fish massage and spa. That night, we decided to try it, but when we saw the hundreds of fish swarming in the water, we hesitated to get in. We were told the "hot spring fish" (as the hotel staff referred to them) would nibble on and exfoliate our dead skin, making our legs smoother. It sounded harmless enough, but we were still worried that they would get carried away and eat into our flesh. Then an older man came over and placed his leg into the warm spring water, his face breaking into a contented smile. Encouraged by his actions, I slowly dipped my toes, my calf and finally my whole leg into the water. It felt like the fish were kissing my skin with all their might; I guess they were very hungry!

2

1. The 108-metre-high statue of Bodhisattva of the Sea can be reached by taking a cablecar from the Nanshan Temple.

2. Russian water ballet performers present a good show every night at the Boao Golden Coast Hot Spring Hotel.

3. One should not miss experiencing the "hot spring fish" massage when visiting Hainan.

4. In a sunny morning, guests can practise yoga with staffs at the Crown Spa Resort Hainan.

5. The hotel's swimming pool is almost linked with the vast sea.

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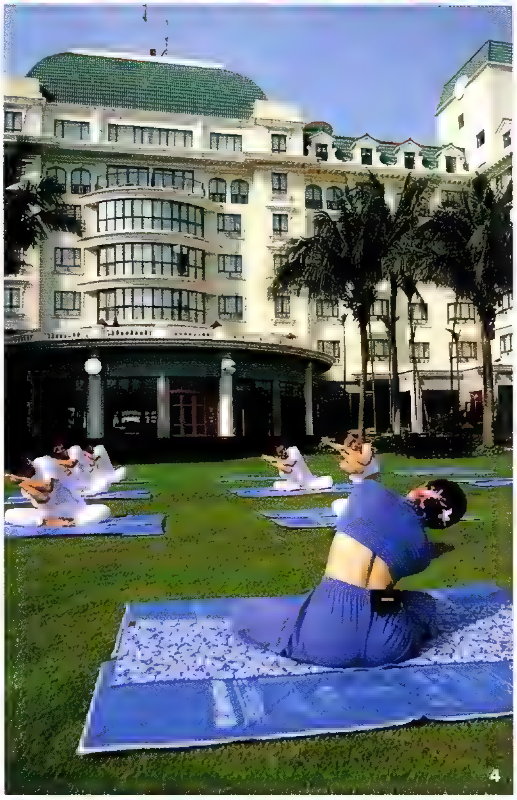
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We went on to enjoy the sauna and a soak in a Chinese herb hot spring until 10:30 p.m. The next morning, after a nice breakfast buffet, we took a taxi to Ming Zhu Plaza in town to buy coconut coffee and candies for souvenirs. At noon, we ate the delicious Four Great Dishes (Wenchang chicken, Hele crab, Dongshan lamb and Jiaji duck), all the best-known recipes from rural Hainan, at the Longquan Chinese Restaurant. Full of good food and happy memories, we packed up our few things — a perfect ending to a quick yet relaxing trip.

Travel Tips

Facts of Hainan: The province, also known as "Qiong" for short or "Coconut Island", has three municipalities, 16 counties and the Xisha, Nansha, Zhongsha islands. Total area is 34,000 sq km. Haikou city is its capital.

Weather: Abundant in sunshine and rain all year round. Warmest time is August, while Haikou will be cooler between December and March.

Total population: About 8 million. The Han is the majority, while there are also minority groups including the Li, Miao and Hui.

Language: Over 5 million of the Hainan people speak Hainan language (accent similar to that of Chaozhou or Fujian people). But many of them can also speak Mandarin and Cantonese.

Food: Farm banquet "Four Great Dishes" (Wenchang chicken, Hele crab, Dongshan lamb, Jiaji duck) can be tried in decent Chinese restaurants; coconut coffee (brands: Li Shen or Chun Guang) and candies, can be bought in supermarkets.

Accommodation:

Sanya

1. Yalong Bay Mangrove Tree Resort

Add: Yalong Bay National Resort District, Sanya, Hainan

Tel: (86-898) 8855 8888 (ext. 6676) Website: www.mangrovetreeresort.com

Features: Very new, Thai-style, spacious, harmonious mixed with nature. It is Hainan's only hotel which owns swimming pool with a slipping ladder as well as a diving-training pool.

Bo'ao

2. Boao Golden Coast Hot Spring Hotel

Add: 8 Golden Coast Avenue, Boao, Hainan

Tel: (86-898) 6277 8888 Website: www.boao-golden.com.cn

Features: Very relaxed environment. The hotel's swimming pool is filled with natural hot spring water all year round, with water ballet by Russian performers every night.

Haikou

3. Crown Spa Resort Hainan

Add: 1 Qiongshan Avenue, East Riverside, Haikou

Tel: (86-898) 6596 6888 Website: www.crownsparesorthainan.com

Features: Voted as one of the top 10 resorts most welcomed by tourists, the hotel owns Guinness Record's world's biggest spa centre, as well as the unique hot spring fish therapy, a must-try item for every guest.

Others

4. Hilton Sanya Resort & Spa

Add: Yalong Bay National Resort District, Sanya, Hainan

Tel: (86-898) 8858 8888 Website: www.hiltonworldresorts.com

5. Paradise Rainforest Spa & Resort

Add: Qixianling Hot Spring National Park, Baoting, Hainan

Tel: (86-898) 8388 8888 Website: www.hainanparadise.com

6. Sofitel Boao

Add: Dongyu Island, Boao, Hainan

Tel: (86-898) 6296 6888 Website: www.sofitel.com

7. Huandao Tide Hotel

Add: 18 Peace Avenue, Haidian Island, Haikou, Hainan

Tel: (86-898) 6626 8888 Website: www.huandaotide.com

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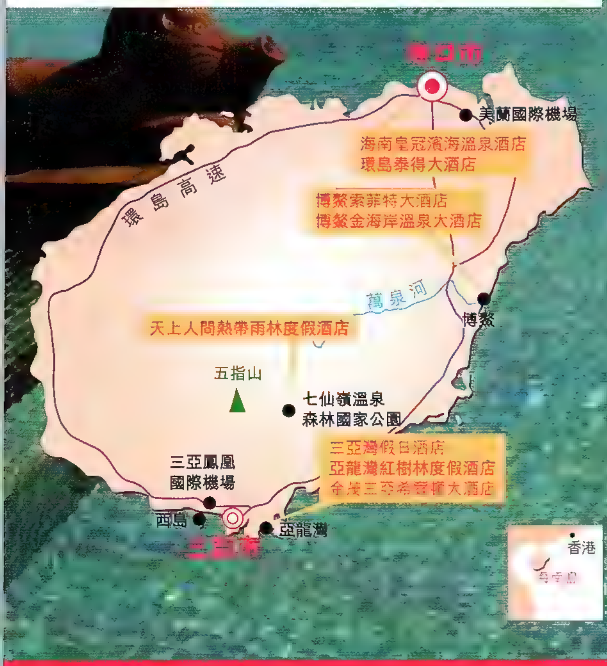
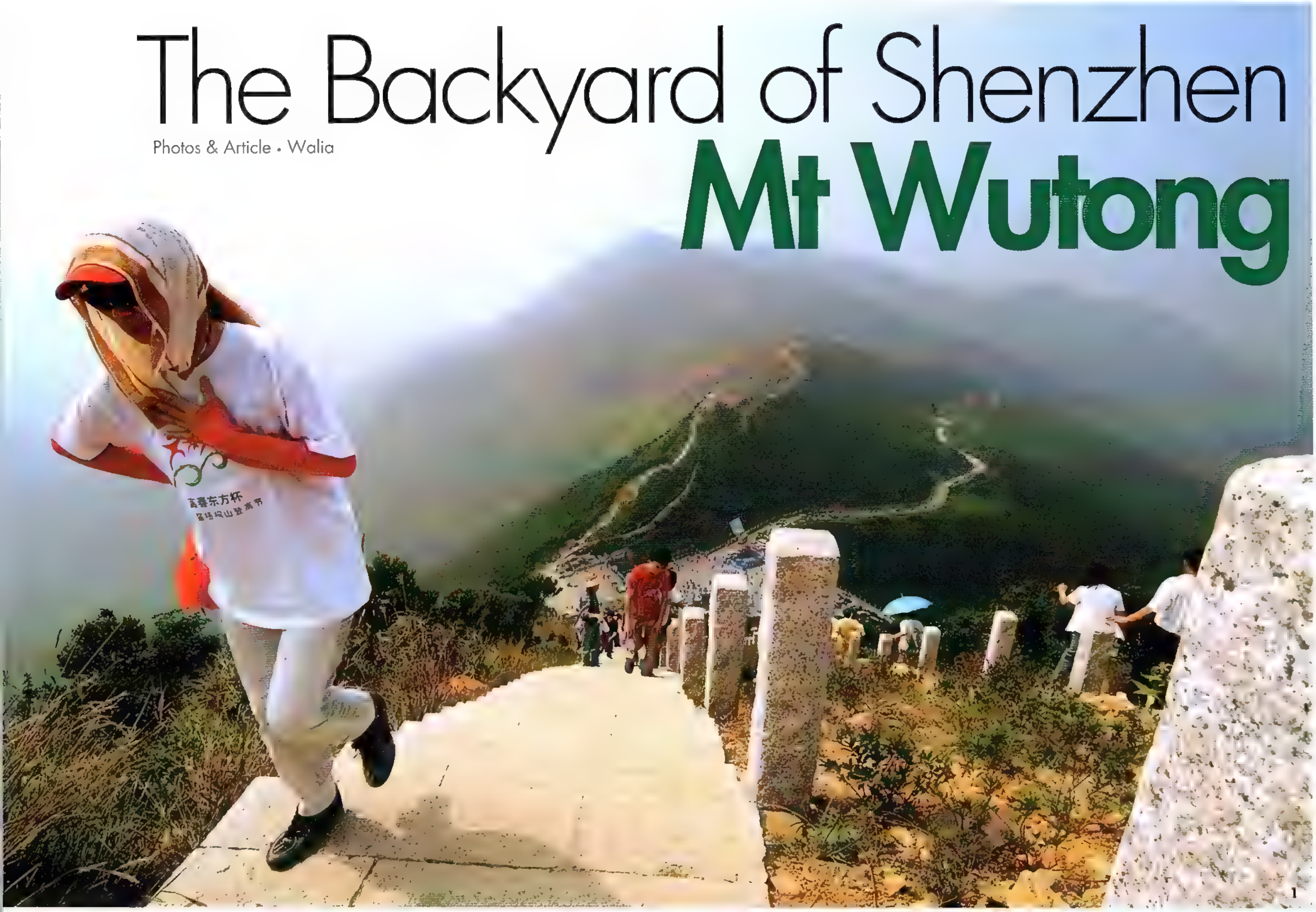


The Backyard of Shenzhen Mt Wutong

Photos & Article • Walia



1

Have you ever thought of taking a glimpse of Hong Kong outside the territory? Or simply spending a weekend trekking somewhere beyond the border? Some veteran hikers who are patrons of the hilly countryside of Hong Kong have, in fact, been lured to Shenzhen, especially Mt Wutong.

Mt Wutong (Phoenix Tree) of Shenzhen is 14 metres shorter than its counterpart, the 958-metre Tai Mo Shan of Hong Kong. Yet, both of them share lots in common. Being the highest mountain in their respective region, both mountains are constantly covered by mist, and frequently visited by wild water buffaloes. In my previous visits to Mt Wutong, I happened to walk past a few water buffaloes.

A Pub of Natural Oxygen

Situated in the east of Shenzhen, neighboring Lo Wu and Yan Tian, Mt Wutong lingers over the regions of Donghu Park, the Shenzhen Fairy Lake Botanical Garden, and Sha Tau Kok woodland. South of the mountain lies Dapeng Bay and east Yan Tian Harbour as well as Greater and Lesser Mei Sha. On the west of it is Chung Ying Street — which is just adjacent to the New Territories of Hong Kong.

2

In 1989, the National Bureau of Forestry authorized the establishment of Mt Wutong National Park. This 678-acre green woodland on the southern slope of Mt Wutong, therefore, has become the backyard of Shenzhen.

Scenic and charming, Mt Wutong is composed of waterfalls, majestic rocks, ancient trees and bamboo forests. More, it is also the cradle of Shenzhen River. On its summit is a spring that flows into the Heavenly Pool. The Heavenly Pool then plunges into the river valley creating some magnificent waterfalls. In the rainy spring season, the stream plummets a hundred metre into the Dragon Pothole. At the foot of the waterfall is a little cave, the habitat for invaluable golden-tail giant salamanders and Impressed tortoises.

The water then flows from the Dragon Pothole to Dragon Ball Mountain where it joins some other eight tributaries and becomes Shenzhen River. *Fengshui* masters consider it an auspicious ground and dubbed it "Nine Dragons Fondling A Pearl."

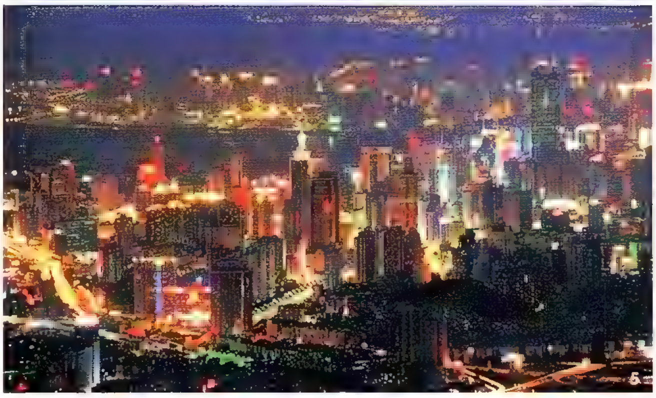
Mt Wutong is easily accessible and is only 10 km from Shenzhen city centre. During the annual Hiking Festival, the mountain is much loved by hikers. There are hiking paths of all sizes. Indeed, it has become a weekend retreat for many city-dwellers.

A Classic Natural Studio for Photographers

In the morning, the fog is usually so thick and cannot be lifted. The changeable weather and height of the mountain has attracted a lot of photographers. A little hint of daybreak is enough to hurry them to climb uphill with their tripods and prepare them for a long haul. A blessed weather, a stroke of luck, together with a right spirit — are components to bring a good harvest to the photographers. Some of them have brought back with them "fruits" that have won them many titles and prizes.

With view so broad and altitude high, the Haohan slope of Big Wutong offers the breathtaking dawn, the great panoramic view of Hong Kong, Yan Tian and Sha Tau Kok, and also the misty wavy Dapeng Bay. The peak of Little Wutong overlooks Shenzhen, a city mushroomed with buildings and people-flooded streets. It is, indeed, amazing to enjoy the view of a city in thick mist. Early morning is the most desirable hours to take pictures of the city as the sky is relatively clear. If you want to take some night shots, you have to be early as there are only a handful spots for your tripods in Little Wutong. Photographers offer little mercy for late comers indeed.

Translated by Dora Tsang



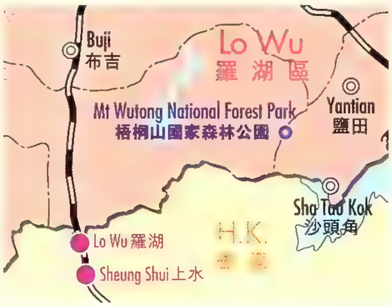
1. In a scorching sunny day, hikers are knackered when climbing up to the peak yet they remain joyful.
2. This "backyard of Shenzhen" has attracted many photographers to take a few shots.
3. On weekends and vacations, many Hong Kongers love to go hiking on Mt Wutong.
4. The mist-shrouded Mt Wutong in the early morning is like a fairyland.
5. The night scene on Mt Wutong is as attractive as that of Hong Kong.

Tips for the Travellers:

From Lo Wu Customs, take Bus 211 to Wutong Village, and then take a mini-bus to go to the peak plaza of Mt Wutong. If you trek up the hill, you will find Haohan Slope. There is a little grocery store in the car park of Big Wutong and a restaurant by the satellite launching tower in Little Wutong

Suggested Treks:

1. Taishan Creek (7.5 km) trek begins on route number one and ends in the car park in Big Wutong.
2. Xiangyuan Trek (4.3 km) begins on Wu Mou Di and ends at the peak of Little Wutong.
3. Dengyuan Trek (1.5 km) begins at the stone mine of Yuandeng and ends in Little Wutong.
4. Xiutong Trek (2.1 km) begins in Yan Tian and ends at the peak of Big Wutong.
5. Bitong Trek (6.5 km) begins in Sha Tau Kok and ends at the peak of Big Wutong.



Lost in Beijing

Modernization is transforming China's capital city at a shocking rate. Hutong neighbourhoods are being systematically dismantled and replaced with high-tech sports stadiums, towering skyscrapers and massive billboards, all in anticipation of the 2008 Olympics, a month-long event.

The Beijing beloved by both visitors and locals is fading away...

To present a modern image to the world, Beijing is being transformed rapidly. (by Henry Lee)

Beijing in the

by Florence Chan

Mrs Xu

"We can't live in a storied building. I feel suffocated at the sight of it."

Aunt Liu Xi

60 years old, brought up in Beijing

"Houses with roof tiles are more suitable for Beijing. Grey tiles covered with a little dust and sand seem to have their own charm."

Shan Guiyan

Governor of Gubeikou Town

"Hand-made dumplings taste the best, because your hands can feel it. Any food made with a feeling must taste good. Machine-made dumpling skins have no such a feeling."

Grandma Xu

"If I had the money for a new house, I would like to live in a new building. I hope to live in a more comfortable area."

by Yu Qiong

Yaya

an Israelite

"I have been an Israeli serviceman for three years. I plan to find a partner from the Youth Hostel to ride a tricycle around China for a year!"

An old lady

walking her dog

"I can sleep soundly in hutong lane, but I couldn't feel peaceful in a concrete building."

Shi Zhaofeng

a photographer for 40 years in Beijing

"In the hutong alleys around the Shichahai (Ten-Temple Lake) area, a quadrangle courtyard can sell for a few million. Quite a number of officials and rich people live there!"

A taxi driver

"There is a bad traffic jam ahead. I can't tell how long it will take us to cover the 15-minute drive. It is very common now in Beijing."

Xiao Wei

a guard at the Simatai Great Wall

"A foreign lady died of lightning strike on the 11th Beac
Tower. I couldn't get onto it today because I haven't brought a
garlic to ward off evil spirits."

Eye of Beijingers

I like to chat with people very much in my trips. When I came to Beijing and saw this big metropolis, I'd like to find story-tellers so that I could learn something about the city from such people along the way.

Photos • Henry Lee   Article • Florence Chan

Ato Mariano

a Filipino living and travelling in China for five years

"I have two homes in Beijing, one at Houhai (Rear Lake) the other at Songzhuang (Song Village). I can't stay in one place for too long, for I have to travel even within a city."

by Florence Chan

Waitress

"Do you know that the guards of honour raising the national flag everyday on the Tian'anmen Square are of the same height? All of them are some six feet high and handsome!"

News reporter

"Two cars crashed in southeastern Beijing, the highway is now blocked. The reason of the accident is believed caused by the high air pollution level today."

Mr Ma

50 years old, a native of Beijing

"The streets in Beijing are wide and broad, and this reflects the generosity of Beijingers."

Beijing 2008

Mr Li

26 years old, a native of Shandong Province working in Beijing

"It is great to hold the Olympic Games! We're proud of our motherland! There are so many construction sites in the city and they're all for the Olympic Games."

Satoshi Otake

a Japanese doing business in Beijing for the Olympic Games

"My mom first came to visit Beijing in 1999. She told me that it was great to start a business in Beijing, so I came to Beijing for a look. A week later, I went back to Japan to take some money and opened a karaoke bar here.

by Yu Qiong

Chen Guangjun

owner of the 798 Photo Gallery

"Foreigners bought 95% of the art works in the gallery, and the rest 5% were bought by the Chinese."

by Yu Qiong

Cui Nuanhua

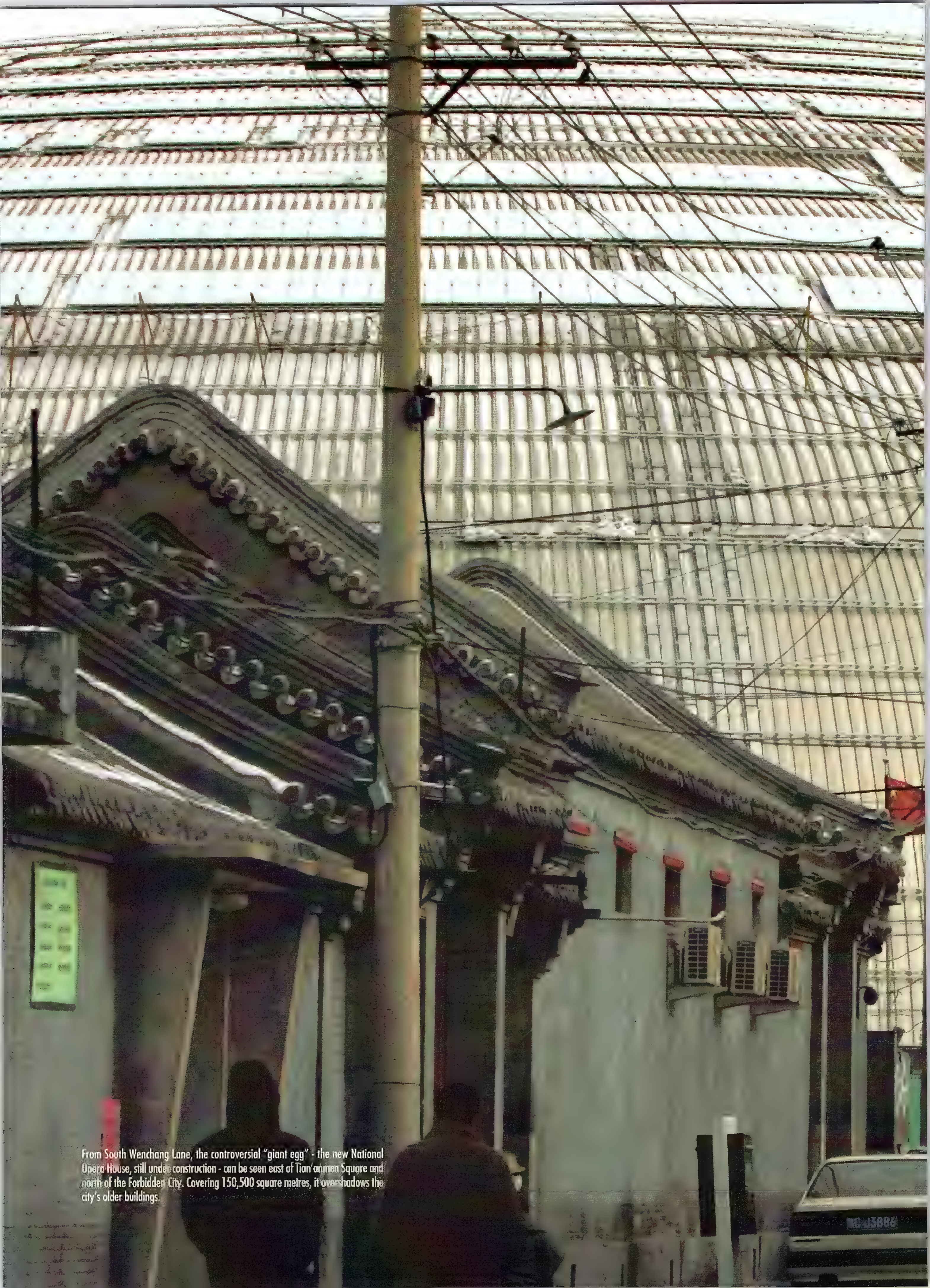
a volunteer working at Forbidden City

"Why the rooms in the Forbidden City are so small while the halls are so spacious? This seems contradictory but they form a unity. The halls must be big enough to show the imperial power and royal status, so they are in such a sharp contrast with the small rooms."

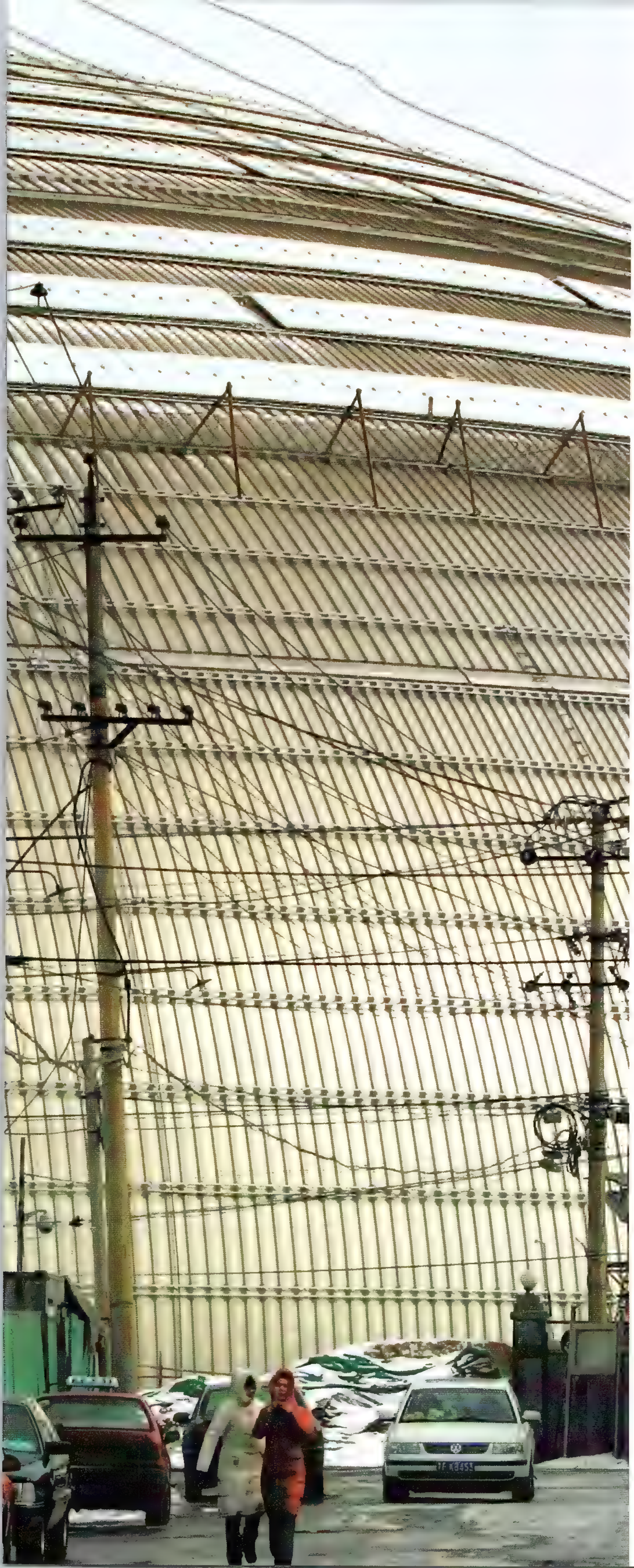
Mr Chen

a native of Guangdong Province living in Beijing for 25 years

"Where can the Beijing Government find so much money to protect so many old houses? In Beijing only the thousand-year-old houses are protected, not those like hutong alleys with only a few hundred years of history."



From South Wenchang Lane, the controversial "giant egg" - the new National Opera House, still under construction - can be seen east of Tian'anmen Square and north of the Forbidden City. Covering 150,500 square metres, it overshadows the city's older buildings.



Photos • Henry Lee Article • Florence Chan

Beijing is remote and strange to me. It is often described as ancient, but I can't figure out how old it is just by looking at it. As the capital of China, it has a long history, and so it must be very old indeed.

But all I see are brand-new, high-rise buildings. For a month-long Olympics, centuries-old houses are being pulled down, and life is becoming one-dimensional. Does modernization have to mean destroying the old and replacing the traditional?

The people of my father's generation say it's a pity that the old Beijing is disappearing. I appreciate that the things of the past have a special charm. What bothers me is that I am totally ignorant about this city's history and what I see around me is no help.

Five days is supposed to be plenty of time to "see" Beijing and for a long time I believed this was true. Yet opening one after another travel guidebook of Beijing, I was confused — how big actually is this city?

I found myself quite ignorant of Beijing, not to say understand her in depth. Then I came to realize that Beijing's greatness doesn't lie in her size, but in her content. Beijing is a city of reality in the fullest sense. How can the Great Wall, the Forbidden City and Tian'anmen Square alone represent it? I have no idea where I should start to tour Beijing. If I am to tour Xinjiang, I know where to begin and where to end. But for Beijing, where do I begin?

I am lost in Beijing.

On Track for Discovery ▪▪▪

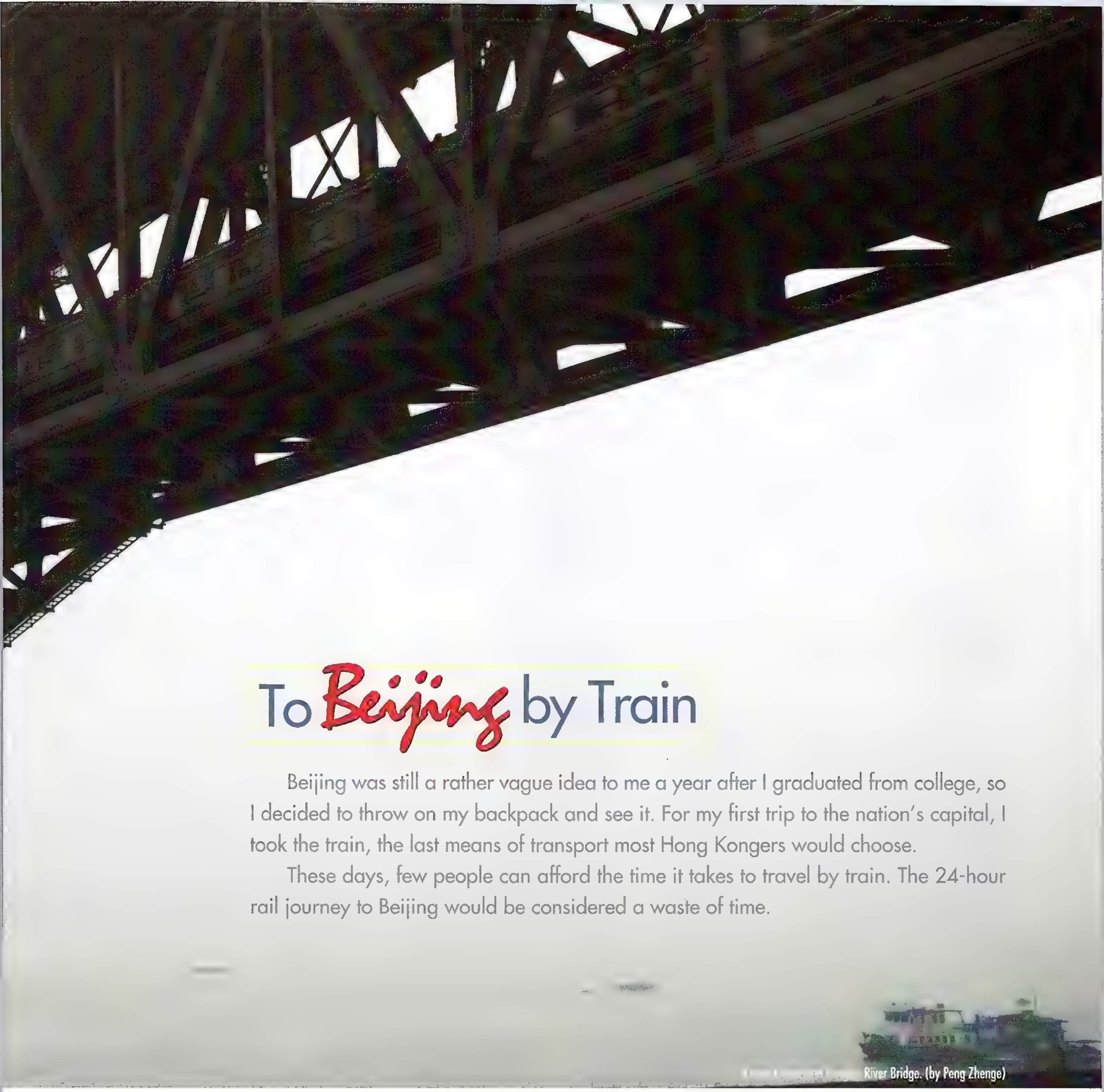
I like to travel by train; the singing rails, the weathered cars, the old-fashioned platforms, the uniformed stationmasters and the constant jumble of passengers have a charm that has always appealed to me.

I like to watch the other passengers, each with their own story. Taking a train is like going on a treasure-hunt — you can collect many stories if you pay attention and dig deep.

I met Auntie Liu in a nearly empty carriage. She grew up in Beijing but came alone to Hong Kong in her 40s to work. Now more than 10 years later, she was returning to Beijing. She talked about her childhood there, the capital in the old days, and the grey brick walls of the quadrangle courtyard with its red gate.

I was told that the train to Beijing would pass both the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers. As my knowledge of China's two biggest rivers came only from books and pictures, I was full of expectation.

"In the past when we took a train to Beijing, the train had to run onto a ship to cross the Yangtze since there was no bridge then. It was totally different from the way things are today!" explained Auntie Liu. After a train attendant told me we would pass the Yangtze that night, I stayed awake, waiting for the moment. When we reached the Yangtze River



To *Beijing* by Train

Beijing was still a rather vague idea to me a year after I graduated from college, so I decided to throw on my backpack and see it. For my first trip to the nation's capital, I took the train, the last means of transport most Hong Kongers would choose.

These days, few people can afford the time it takes to travel by train. The 24-hour rail journey to Beijing would be considered a waste of time.

[illegible] River Bridge. (by Peng Zhenge)

Bridge, I lifted the curtain and stretched my neck to look. But only darkness greeted me, not a single glint of water.

Early the next morning, it was announced that we were about to cross the Yellow River, followed by a brief introduction to this Mother of Rivers in China. Very little water was running along the riverbed in early winter, covered as it was by mud, sand and stones. In fact, since 1985 the Yellow River has experienced flow interruptions every year with dry periods lasting for more than 200 days. I guessed that I was looking at a dry section of the river. Then Auntie Liu said, "The Yellow River used to be rich and full, but now it's dried up and there is nothing but yellow mud in its course."

First Impressions ...

From Auntie Liu's descriptions, I felt I had already toured the city on the train, and my imagination ran wild for the rest of the journey. But as we passed through the fields and headed into the city, the first things I noticed were construction site after construction site, piles of garbage and endless flyovers. This seems to be a city undergoing tremendous change.

Under Urban Skies

After a week in Beijing, I could no longer see the true colour of the sky over the city. A nasty mass of smog was in the way.

300,000 Tons of Dust and Sand in a Day ▪▪▪

One Beijinger told me there were actually many cloudless days in the city, and I believed him on the condition that the air pollution was not too bad. The city's average blue-sky index is 230 days per year, but in the first four months of 2006, Beijing has had only 60 such days. In April alone the city suffered seven sand and dust storms, and on the 17th of April, 300,000 tons of sand and dust descended on the capital. So far there have been 17 days of seriously polluted air this year, twice the final total for last year. The figure is quite frightening, and it was even worse to experience it.

Tian'anmen Square is the largest open square in the world, but on the day I was there, visibility was so bad I could only see 50 metres in front of me. I could barely make out the huge image of the late Chairman Mao, not to mention the stateliness of the famous square. I stood there feeling confused and lost.

Zero Distance: Traffic Jams, Crowded Streets and Flyovers ▪▪▪

Beijing seems to have become synonymous with traffic jams. Every morning, Beijingers rush off to work. Buses are so packed that people's faces seem to be pressed up against the windows. At bus stops, passengers have to fight their way to

1. Rain refreshes Beijing's polluted air.
2. It's difficult to breathe during the dust-storms.
3. Beijing hopes to tackle its severe traffic jams and the pollution they cause in time for the Olympics.

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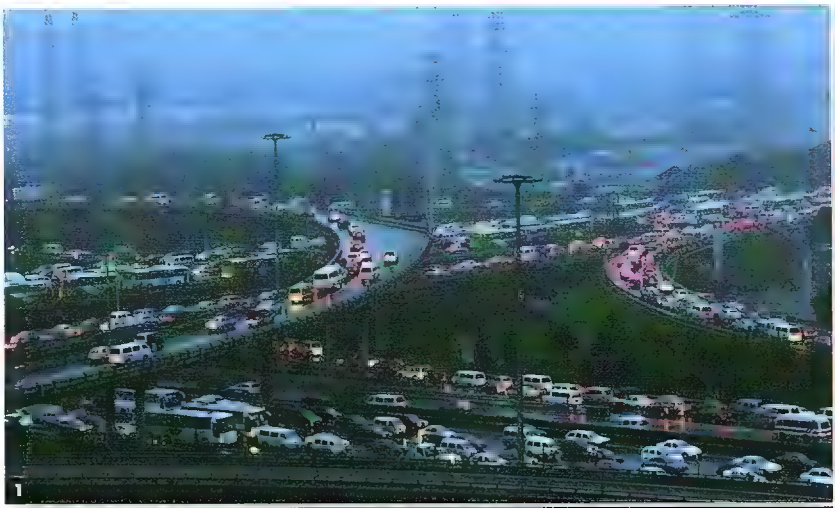
the rear door to get off.

Eventually I understood why there were so many flyovers in Beijing. I once saw four layers of flyovers tangled together in the polluted air, all bumper-to-bumper with cars. That picture left a deep impression of Beijing as a city where space and distance are so limited that the traffic alone can be suffocating.

The street was so crowded that a bus could only move in 50-centimetre spurts. When it came to a halt, its rhythmic rumble combined with blaring car horns, people shouting and the dust from the road works all around the city were dizzying and disorienting.

One of my taxi receipts:
Starting time: 17:05
Finishing time: 18:17
Distance travelled: 9.1 km
Time spent waiting: 53:38
Fare: 37 yuan

I could only smile bitterly and helplessly. It took me one hour and 12 minutes to go 9 km, with 53 minutes 38 seconds of that time spent waiting and only 18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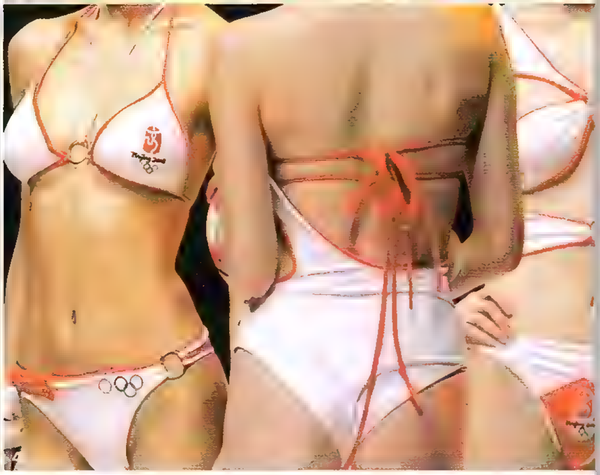

minutes actually moving, at an average speed of less than 10 km per hour.

Staying in a Hutong

To escape the city chaos, I stayed in a lovely hostel in a hutong alley.

The hostel was located in a hutong near Dashanlan (also known as Dazhalan 大柵欄). It wasn't well-located, quite far from the underground station, but it suited me fine, as I like to walk. And it allowed me to observe everyday life in a hutong alley.

A photographer from Beijing once said that the hutong were being bulldozed faster than his camera could capture them. So I didn't mind taking long walks through the hutong before they were gone forever.

Hawkers could be heard advertising their goods and services all along the alleyways of Dashanlan - mending pots, selling posters of the late Chairmen Mao. Animated conversations between neighbours and the gentle ring of bicycle bells filled the air.

Your Dream Factory or My Home?

With the approach of the Olympics, the games' mascots, the Five Friendlies (Fuwa), can be seen throughout the city. But where do Beijingers' dreams fit in the overwhelming sea of "One World, One Dream" slogans?

Native Beijingers and Chinese from elsewhere have different ideas. I met a 20-year-old from Shandong Province who had worked in Beijing for a few years. To

1. The highways are jammed after a brief shower.
2. Hutong living seems to encourage stronger friendships and happier residents.
3. Construction sites in Beijing are a major cause of air pollution.
4. Olympic fever permeates every aspect of the locals' lives, right down to their swimming costumes.
5. To cope with the city's rapid development, Beijing is now surrounded by six ring roads.
6. The Olympics have set the whole city on fire.

Citichamp
alace
太平庄北站
立水桥
大屯
奥林匹克公园
奥体中心
森林公园
北宫门
颐和园
成府路
中关村
双榆树
学院南路
白石桥
动物园
玉渊潭公园
西直门
车公庄
阜成门
新街口
平安里
西四
灵境胡同
天安门
西单
长椿街
宣武门
和平门
前门
菜市口
陶然亭
天坛公园
西庄
角门北站
石榴庄路
马家楼
宋家庄
刘家窑
蒲黄榆
天坛东门
瓷器口
北京站
王府井
东单
灯市口
东四
张自忠路
北新桥
雍和宫
安定门
鼓楼大街
积水潭
和平西桥
和平里北街
东直门
东四十条
工人体育场
亮马河
农展馆
工体北路
呼家楼
光华路
国贸
双井
劲松
五棵松
万寿路
公主坟
军事博物馆
木樨地
南礼士路
复兴门
建国门
永安里
四惠桥
高碑店
定福庄
杨闸
京通快速
北京西站
六里桥
四方桥
分钟寺桥
京沈高速公路
京津塘高速公路
京石高速公路
五环路
四环路
三环路
二环路
首都机场高速公路
八角游乐园
玉泉路
万柳站

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him, the old houses so precious to the locals were useless trash. He was very excited about all the construction going on around the capital in preparation for the Olympics. Like so many other Chinese people, pride was etched all over his face at the chance to hold one of the world's most important sporting events in his home country.

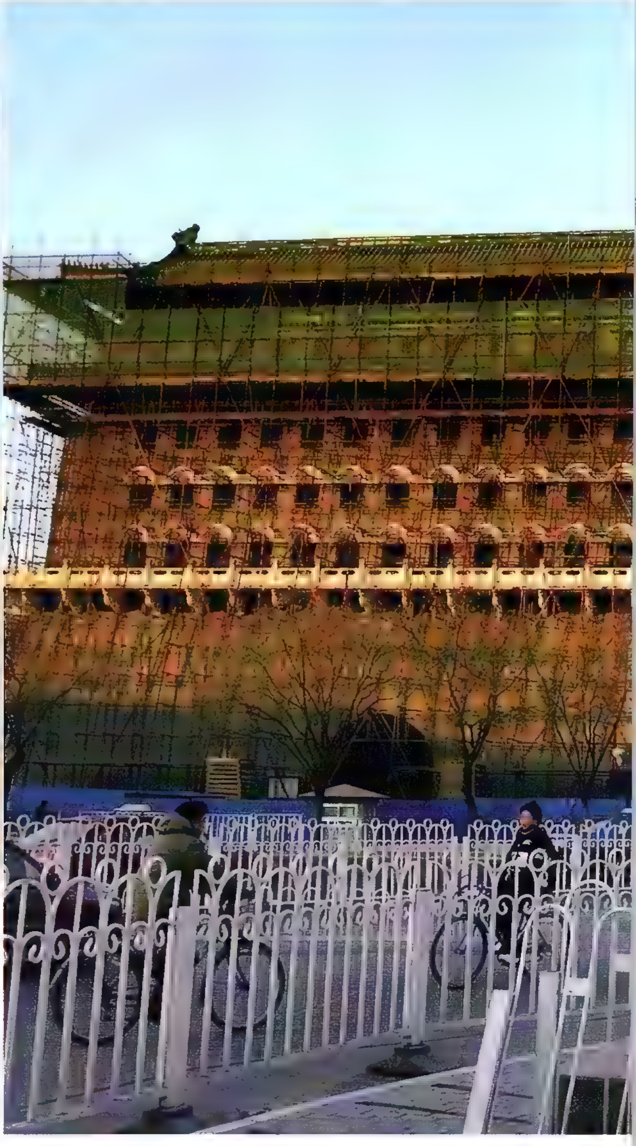
Many long-term residents, however, are not as excited about the games. The thorough reconstruction and re-arrangement of their city have changed their lives completely. To them, Beijing is home, not just the backdrop for an event that, while momentous, will only last a month.

This dream of Beijingers is both simple and luxurious.

Fabricated City

One elderly resident told me, "The Beijing of today looks like it was moulded in a factory — the tall buildings, streets, houses and malls all look the same. I wouldn't tour around the city, because it would make me sad." She hasn't got used to the changes. And it's getting harder to find the capital's roots, even with a history that stretches back over five ancient dynasties.

The city used to have its own distinct architectural character. But as one mainland photographer has said, "Beijing has become a museum of world architecture, where every conceivable style of modern architecture is on display." Far worse, these new buildings are going up on the sites of centuries-old houses, blotting out the past completely.



True Beijing Flavour

One of the best ways to experience the real Beijing is on the back of an old Beijinger's bike.

A Special Guided Tour ▪▪▪

I picked a sunny morning to visit the Temple of Heaven. All of Beijing's famous tourist destinations are being refurbished ahead of the Olympics, and the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven were no exceptions. The Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests was draped in so many green safety nets that it was scarcely visible.

The Temple of Heaven has a very indigenous Beijing flavour. It is a truly pleasant site among the city's many tourist attractions, because there are no pushy peddlers or tricycle drivers or so-called traditional handicrafts, which are actually machine-made, clustered around it. It was late autumn, and golden leaves lay scattered across the grounds. All around me elderly couples played with their grandchildren, while people practised dance routines, sang revolutionary songs, played with diabolos, and kicked shuttlecocks about in a jolly atmosphere.

Meeting Uncle Tang ▪▪▪

At an intersection, I came upon an elderly man in a dark padded jacket encouraging a lame man to walk. I stopped and asked him for directions, and we began to chat. Tang Mingqi was born in Beijing. His son was born in the Year of the Dog, as was I. When I told him this, he treated me like his own son. For the past five

1. Construction or destruction? Beijingers have different opinions.
2. East meets west on Beijing's streets.
3. Older homes are routinely torn down and replaced by modern tower blocks said to suit the tastes of foreign buyers.
4. Many labourers simply "live" at the sites on which they work.
5. Uncle Tang plays a bamboo musical instrument as we stroll through the Tianqiao area. (by Florence Chan)

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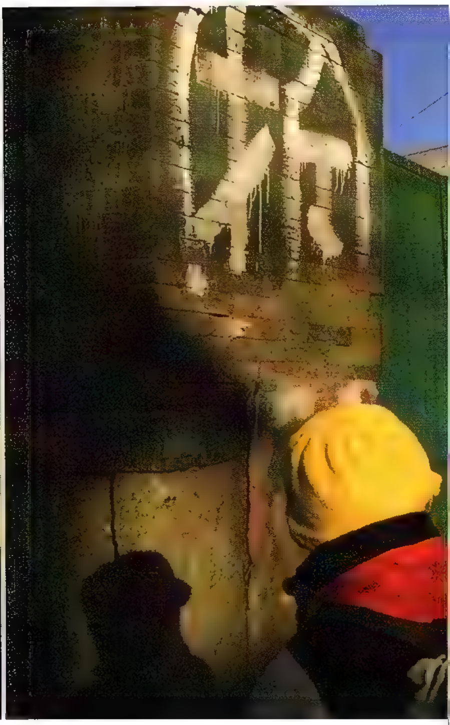
years, he has returned home at 5 p.m. every day to walk his dog by the riverside.

In the 1980s, when he heard that Guangzhou was a good place to make money, he went there with just 40 yuan, his monthly salary having been just 21.7 yuan. He spent 18 yuan on two pairs of jeans and resold them in Beijing for 25 yuan each. As his profit exceeded his former salary, he began selling clothes, making enough money in the first year to ensure his retirement. Since he had a contended life and nothing in particular to do, he offered to be my tour guide.

Let's Go to Tiaoqiao!

As we walked, Uncle Tang seemed to read my mind, "I know what you're thinking: 'Why all the concrete in Beijing? There's enough of it in Hong Kong, and Beijing can't begin to compete with Hong Kong on that!' Actually, you've only been here for a few days, so you still have a superficial knowledge of the place. Beijing has a lot more to offer! If you can read Beijing inside-out throughout your life, that's great! Terrific! Tourists always go to places like Wangfujing, where Beijingers would never go. Since I'm free, I'll be your guide and take you to something traditional and fun!"

As a long-time resident, Uncle Tang seemed even sadder than I was that tourists



to Beijing only seemed impressed by the flashy new buildings. He was bent on defending his hometown. But with the old neighbourhoods being replaced so rapidly, how much real, indigenous Beijing flavour still remained?

As he talked, Uncle Tang patted the back of his bicycle and asked me to sit down. I had actually been thinking how wonderful it would be to tour Beijing by bike, as every family had one. My trip to Beijing was now perfect.

I climbed aboard and wondered where we would find the real city. After pausing to think, Uncle Tang said, "Let's go to Tianqiao!" Tianqiao (天橋) is in the Xuanwu District. There used to be a lofty, single-arch marble bridge here. It was specially built in the Ming Dynasty (1368—1644) for the emperors, allowing them to go from Zhengyangmen (South-Facing Gate) to the Temple of Heaven and the Xiannong (Ancestral Farm) Altar to offer sacrifices to the heavens. Since the emperor was referred to as the Son of Heaven, the bridge was named Tianqiao, or Heavenly Bridge. When the street was expanded in 1934, the bridge was dismantled, but the market that developed here remains to this day. Even a market in Beijing has such a rich history; no wonder it is said that every brick and tile in the city has a story.

Scores of stalls, large and small, of every kind attract crowds of determined treasure hunters. Uncle Tang said, "Beijingers are particular about the classes of what they play with. Be they expensive or cheap, each has its own element of fun and its own enthusiasts. Everything entertaining thing you can think of can be found at Tianqiao."

Flavours Savoured in Sadness ▪▪▪

We left Tianqiao and rode through the hutong alleys nearby. Beijingers are most upset by the dismantling of these neighbourhoods. My visit unavoidably caused Uncle Tang to reminisce about life in the hutong and made him relive his sorrow at having to leave it.

Growing up in a quadrangle courtyard, he and his family moved into a multi-storey apartment block on the orders of the government. He said people in the hutong neighbourhoods used to help each other, but now no one looks out for, or even knows, their neighbours anymore. Tang's son would probably not grow up in

1. The Temple of Heaven wonderfully conveys the old Beijing, and pushy souvenir hawkers are kept away.

2. "China, chai la (拆啦)!" - meaning "Dismantle China!" - is a popular saying at the moment.

3. Beijing is racing towards modernization faster than a Formula One car.

4. Authentic trinkets can be found at Tianqiao. (by Florence Chan)

2

Beijing
Opening Soon

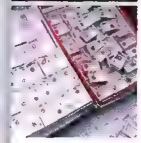
3

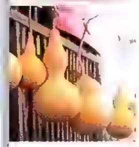
the same friendly, caring atmosphere he had known as a child.

Large white characters for "dismantle" were painted on the hutong walls, spelling its imminent end. I heard Uncle Tang talking to himself: "This hutong alley will have to go before long. Next time you come, it will not be here. Most of them are gone already." Deep sadness filled his seemingly flat voice. Beijing's transformation was harder to accept than I imagined. No wonder the old Beijingers shed tears; they cannot even hold onto their homes. Sadness has gradually overpowered even the strongest flavours of Beijing.

At dusk Uncle Tang took me back to my hostel. I got off the bike and watched his shadow recede, his words echoing in my ears: "After living in Beijing for decades, I'm so sad to see these places being torn down. The old Beijing is gone, and the city has become tasteless. Do you see it? It's so plain and characterless; can you understand it? You're too young..." Will I ever fully understand his profound feelings and his pain?

Translated by L. Yu





Just for Fun at Tianqiao

Bamboo clappers: There are many ways to prepare bamboo clappers, by steaming or boiling, and strict instructions for what kind of oil can be used to fry them and in what season the bamboo used for this purpose should be felled.

Hundred-day worms: This worm lives just 100 days; hence, the name. Each worm has its own house and feeds off apples. Beijingers keep them for fun. The worms cost from three to five yuan.

Walnuts: I saw a pair of walnuts selling for 1,500 yuan. The walnut excretes oil, which can be rubbed into the hands as a moisturizer. They make a nice gift for fathers.

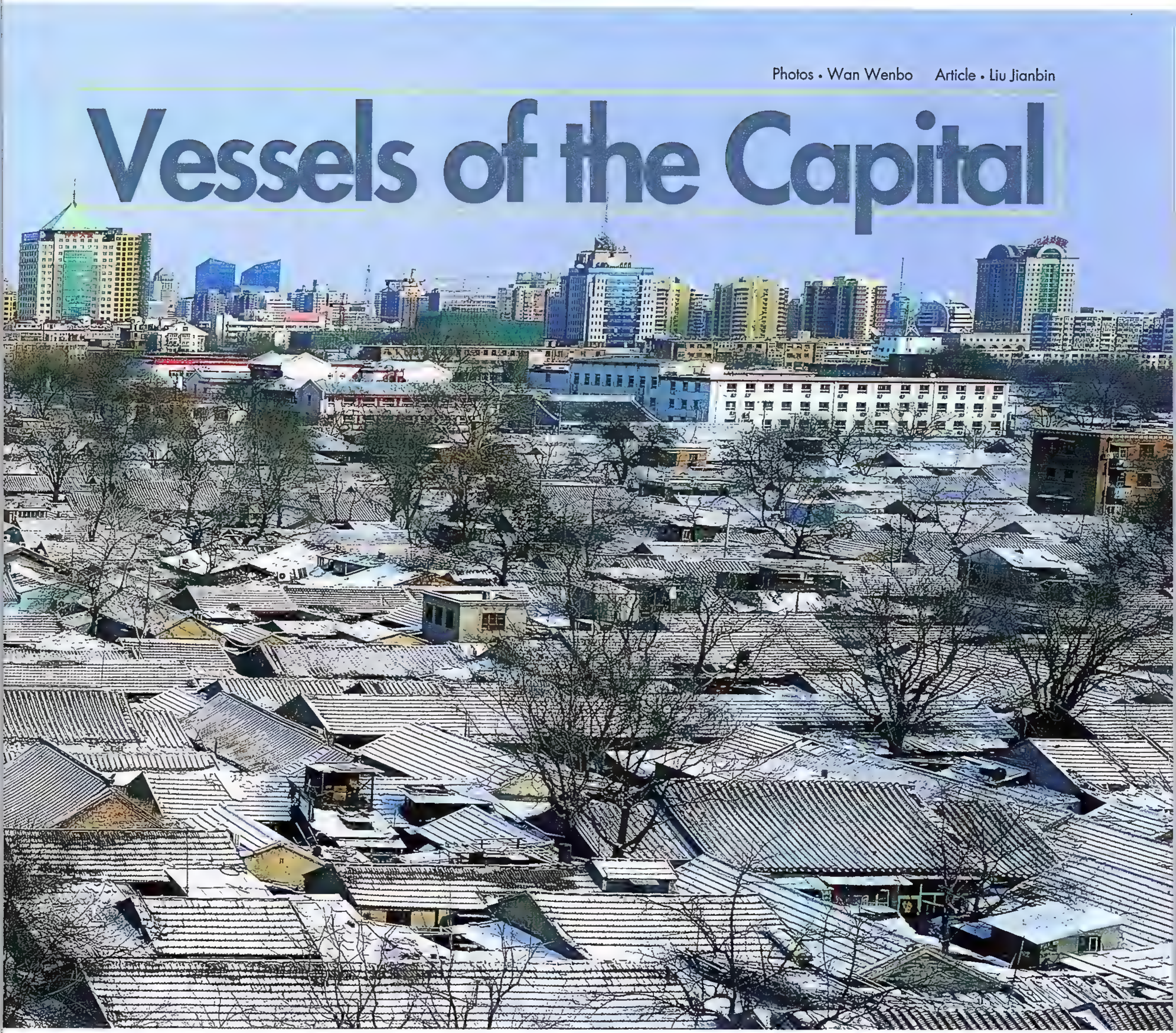
Gourds: Small, decorative gourds are on sale for 1,000 yuan each. If a plot of land yields even one attractive gourd, it will pay off for the farmer.

4

If the city of Beijing is a man, the hutongs are his blood vessels, which are covert but spread to all parts of the body. Beijing's hutongs are unique in China and in the world. In hutongs, there are numerous marvelous architectures, cultural relics, as well as many interesting stories.

Photos • Wan Wenbo   Article • Liu Jianbin

Vessels of the Capital



1. The Bell Tower as viewed from the Drum Tower.

2. The Zhuanta (Brick Pagoda) Hutong. Located in the middle area of Xicheng (Western City) District, on the west side of the South Xisi Street, the lane got its name from the Wansong Old Man Pagoda situated at its east entrance. It is an old hutong that has remained as it was in the Yuan Dynasty. The pagoda retains in perfect shape. Famous literary figures such as Lu Xun, Lao She and Zhang Henshui, had lived here.

"There are 3,600 hutongs with names and those unnamed are as many as a cow's hairs." It vividly depicts the huge amount of Beijing's hutongs. Beijing is a city of more than 3,000 years old, and it has been serving as a national capital for over 800 years. Its hutongs, crisscross and time-beaten, form an important part of its past glory, together with those magnificent and splendid palaces. In fact, the Forbidden City and imperial gardens, and other representatives of noble architecture, occupy only one fifth of the ancient capital city in area; the greater part of it is occupied by hutongs and quadrangles (si he yuan 四合院, courtyard with houses built on the four sides), where the common-people culture has developed.

Hutong: A Term 100 Years Older than Beijing ▪▪▪

The term of hutong came into being 100 years earlier than the city's name,

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The Southern and Northern Half Lanes

The Northern Lane, situated on the northern side of the West Nanheng Street, was so named because of its length, which was half of an ordinary hutong. In the Nanbanjie (Southern Half) Hutong, there is the Shaoxing Guesthouse, where Lu Xun once lived for seven years and wrote his masterpiece, A Madman's Diary (狂人日記), which is the first vernacular short story ever created in modern Chinese literature history. In the late years of the Qing Dynasty, officials, scholars, literary figures and opera singers often gathered in the Guangheju Restaurant situated in this hutong. Leading reformers, including Tan Sitong, were arrested in Liuyang Guesthouse situated in the lane before they were executed in 1899.

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Beijing. In antiquity, the area was called Ji and Yan; in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), it was named Youzhou. Later on, it was called differently in different periods, such as Nanjing (Southern Capital) in the Liao Dynasty (907-1125); and Zhongdu (Middle Capital) in the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234). When it became the Great Capital of the Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368), hutongs were included into the city planning. It was decided that a hutong should be six steps (about 9.3 metres) wide, while a small street being 12 steps (18.6 metres) wide, and a big street, 24 steps (37.2 metres) wide. In 1403, Emperor Yongle of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) moved his capital here and at the same time changed the city's name from Beiping to Beijing. That is why the term of hutong came into being 127 years earlier than the city name of Beijing.

The Yuan Great Capital: Foundation of Today's Beijing

The location of the Yuan-dynasty Great Capital was in the northeastern suburbs of the Jin's Middle Capital. Its east and west city walls were as what we see today, while the southern edge was along the Chang'an Boulevard and the northern border was the Earthen City by the Northern Third Ring Road. Within each city gate, there was a straight boulevard; the city boasted nine such main streets, including the one built along the city walls, called Shuncheng Street. Several of today's major streets, such as the South and North Dongsi streets, South and North Xisi streets, Xizhimen Inner Street, and the streets from Dongsi Lane North No. 1 to No. 14 are old streets of the Yuan Great Capital. Actually, they are the foundation of the today's Beijing.

In 1368, Xu Da, a general of Zhu Yuanzhang, founder of the Ming Dynasty, led his army to conquer the Yuan capital. He moved the northern city wall southward to today's Andingmen and Deshengmen. In 1419, the 17th year of the Yongle reign, Zhu Di, or Emperor Chengzu, of the Ming Dynasty, moved his capital to Beijing. He moved Beijing's southern wall to the line of today's Chongwenmen, Qianmen and Xuanwumen. During the Jiajing reign of the Ming Dynasty, the outer city of Beijing was constructed, and ever since, the area outside Qianmen became a flourishing business centre, with a concentrated population and increasing new houses and streets.

In the Qing Dynasty, Beijing's hutongs increased remarkably. In the Ming Dynasty, there were 1,170 hutongs, of which 459 were called "hutong". In the Qing Dynasty, the total number of hutongs was 2,077, 978 of which were called

1. At the joint of the Southern Half Hutong and Nanheng Street, after a light snow.

2. Shaoxing Guesthouse, where Lu Xun once lived for seven years.

3,4. Relief decoration of the mansions at Dong Mianhua Hutong.

5. The wooden door gate of a mansion at Tie Shu Xie Jie was repeatedly stepped and therefore deformed.

Rice Market Hutong

Houses lining the lane are neat, many of them being either famed persons' former residences or guesthouses; among those once lived here were several Qing-dynasty court officials. Six of the original guesthouses still exist, including the Nanhai Guesthouse, where Kang Youwei, leader of the reformers, once stayed; and the Anhui Jingxian Guesthouse, which housed the editorial department of Weekly Review, a renown magazine in the May Fourth period, with Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao as its major publishers.

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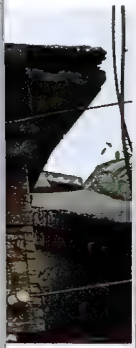
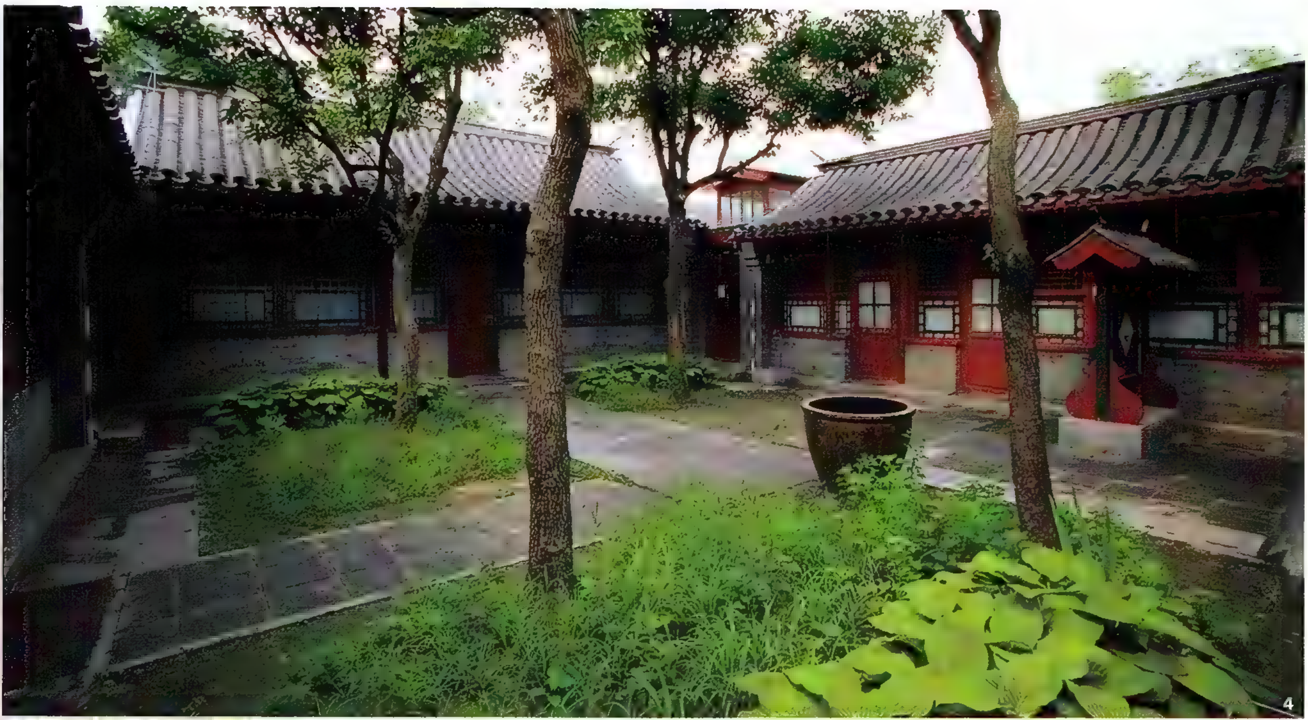
Shaanxi Lane

It has been named so since the Ming Dynasty. In the Qing Dynasty, there were many guesthouses in the lane, including the Jizhou Guesthouse and Sichuan Guesthouse. In the Yushu Lane, which crosses Shaanxi Lane, there is the former residence of Sai Jinhua, a noted prostitute in the early years of the 20th century. Being shared by several families now, it's hard to find traces of its former owner.





"hutong". A great number of the Qing hutongs were developed from the Ming lanes. For example, one old hutong might be divided into two or three sections and given different names. In general, the Qing-dynasty layout of Beijing's streets and hutongs were the same of the Ming Dynasty.

Hutongs: Branches of the City Tree ▪▪▪

The term of hutong refers to Beijing's big and small streets and lanes. The basic sector of a hutong is composed of quadrangles, mansions and various residential courtyards. To remember Beijing's hutong means to carry on the historical tradition of the Beijing culture. It is also nostalgia to many Beijingers.

Xuanwu District: Birthplace of Beijing ▪▪▪

Xuanwu District is the birthplace of Beijing. As it is written in The Tablet of Records on the Building of Beijing: "The building of the city started in Ji, whose center is in today's Xuanwu District, which, with a long history, has served as the link between the past and the present. This tablet is built as a witness and memory." Among the hutongs in Xuanwu District, some can be traced to the Tang, Liao, Jin, Yuan, Ming or Qing dynasties. On this old land, there are such cultural relics as the Tang-dynasty Fayuan Temple; traces of the Youzhou streets and lanes; Liao-dynasty Tianning Temple Pagoda; Jin-dynasty Lotus Pond Garden; as well as the famous commercial street of Dashila and the cultural street of Liulichang prevailed with ancient atmosphere.

Since 1430, the second year of the Zhengtong reign in the Ming Dynasty, when the east one of the three southern gates, named Wenming, was renamed Chongwen, the gate has kept this name for more than 560 years. Other historical sites in Xuanwu District include the Heavenly Temple, Memorial Hall of Yuan Chonghuan, Ruins of the Ming City Walls, Zhengyang Rostrum and many others, totaling 105 in number.

Even in this epoch-making era, traces of the ancient capital can still be found in quiet hutongs and abandoned courtyards.

Translated by Gloria Shang

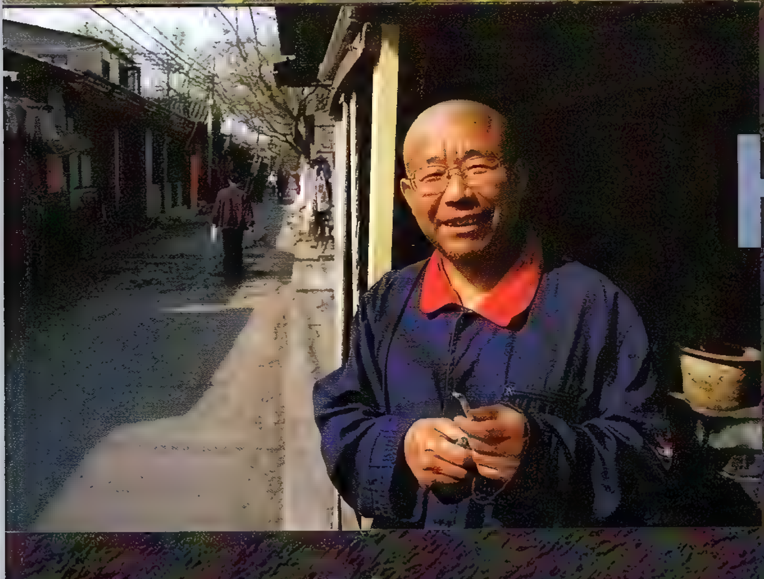
1,2. This is the old coffin shop situated at the north entrance to the Rice Market Hutong. On the eaves are carved characters for the promotion of its products.

3. At the cross of Yushu Lane and Shaanxi Lane.

4,5. No. 19 of Fengfu Hutong north of Dengshikou West Street in Dongcheng District is rich in old Beijing flavour.

Autumn leaves add a bit of nostalgia flavour to the lane. (by Wang Wenbo)

Below: A chess player under the trees in Nan Luogu Xiang Alley



Home Sweet Hutong

Photos & Article • Yu Qiong

The hutong of Nanluogu Lane (South Luogu Lane 南鑼鼓巷) was built during the Yuan Dynasty. Wan Rong (the last empress of the Qing Dynasty), Qi Baishi (the painter) and Mao Dun (the writer) all once lived in the lane.

Beijing's hutong and traditional courtyard homes are just as popular with visitors as the Palace Museum, the Great Wall at Badaling and the city's many other tourist draws.

A Stroll Down Memory Lane ...

Nanluogu Lane, east of the Drum Tower at the axis of Beijing, is about 1,000 metres long.

Yuan Da Du (the Yuan Dynasty capital) covered today's north section of East and West Chang'an streets, reaching south of the Beitucheng Road, west of the Dongzhimen Gate and east of the Xizhimen Gate with a central pavilion built near the Drum Tower. The city was mapped out like a chessboard criss-crossed by 50 lanes with the imperial city at the centre. Luogu Lane was once the dividing line

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between Zhaohui Lane and Jinggong Lane at the centre of the Yuan capital. In line with tradition, there were few commercial buildings in this area, with only a sprinkling of shops built along Luogu Lane. During the Ming Dynasty the inner city was divided into 28 lanes and Zhaohui Lane and Jinggong Lane were merged to become Zhaohui Jinggong Lane. The name Luoguo Lane appeared at that time because it intersected the lane.

Origin of the Name

According to the locals, Luogu (鑼鼓) sounds like luoguo (羅鍋), a northern Chinese word meaning "humpback". This refers to the landscape of the area, which resembles a tortoise's shell. As the tortoise is a symbol of luck and longevity in traditional Chinese culture, it was considered a place of good geomantic omen in past dynasties. It was also known as "Centipede Street" due to the eight symmetrical lanes on either side of Nanluogu Lane.

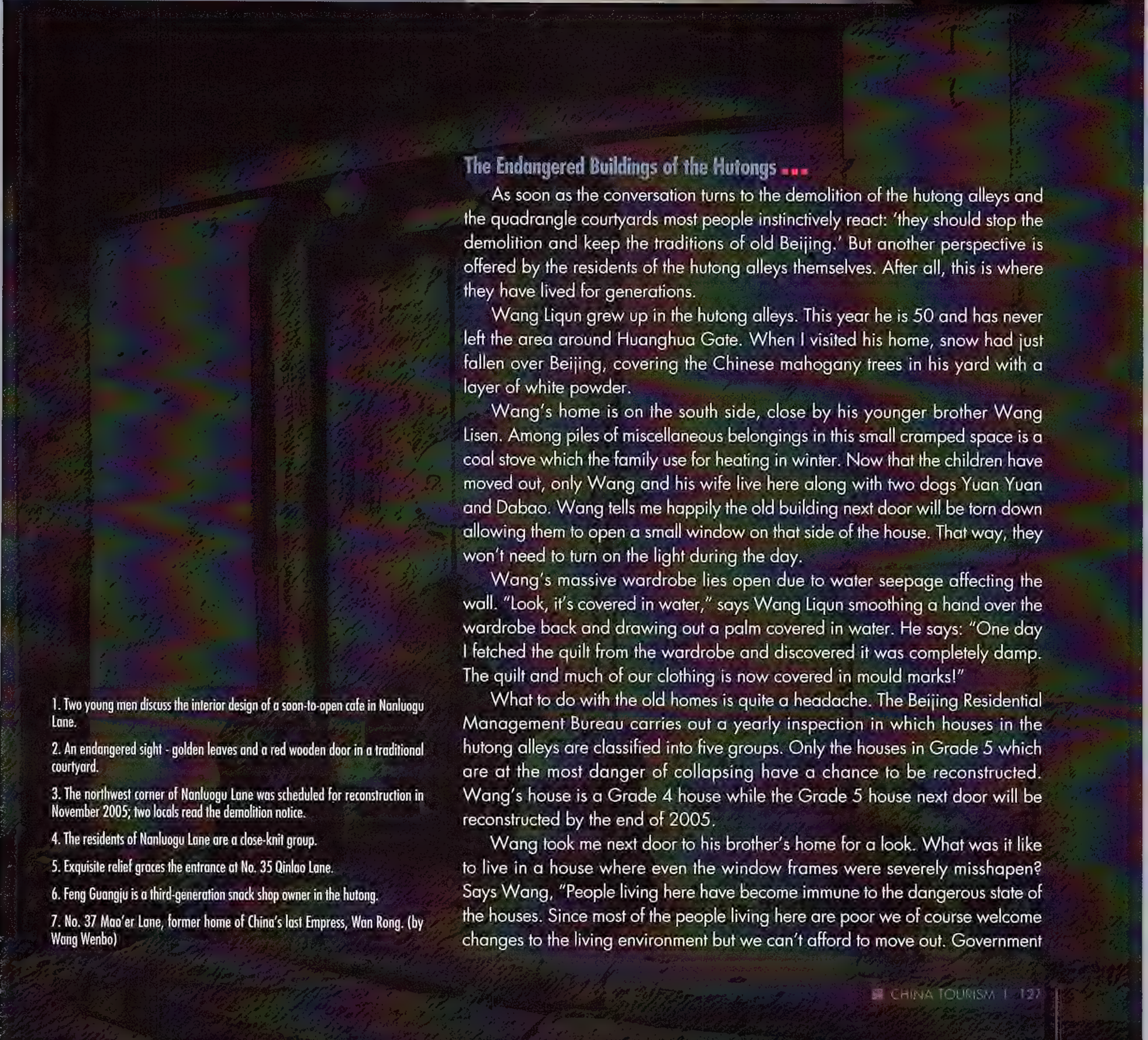
During the early Qing Dynasty, the imperial court ruled that only people from the Eight Banners could live in the inner city around the imperial court; the Han had to live outside the city. People from Xianghuang Banner lived in Nanluogu and Beiluogu lanes. A "Map of Beijing" drawn in 1750, the 15th year of the reign of Qing Emperor Qianlong, records the name change from Luoguo to Nanluogu Lane. The street opposite it on the map is called Beiluogu Lane, which today is the north section of Gulou Dongdajie Zhongduan.

Cafe Culture

The hutongs attract many people nostalgic for the culture of old Beijing. Many distinctive and tasteful bars and cafes, such as the Guoke Bar (過客酒吧), Zheli Cafe (這裡咖啡), Mianhuatang (棉花糖), Hongrenfang (紅人坊), Xijuding (西菊町) and Heixiazi (黑匣子), have opened to serve them, making the hutong even more attractive.

Evenings here are quiet, free from the loud music and noisy crowds of Houhai and Sanlitun. The elegant establishments along Nanluogu Lane offer refreshments and light music, allowing visitors to linger, feeding both body and soul.

Translated by Wang Zengfen



1. Two young men discuss the interior design of a soon-to-open cafe in Nanluogu Lane.

2. An endangered sight - golden leaves and a red wooden door in a traditional courtyard.

3. The northwest corner of Nanluogu Lane was scheduled for reconstruction in November 2005; two locals read the demolition notice.

4. The residents of Nanluogu Lane are a close-knit group.

5. Exquisite relief graces the entrance at No. 35 Qinlao Lane.

6. Feng Guangju is a third-generation snack shop owner in the hutong.

7. No. 37 Mao'er Lane, former home of China's last Empress, Wan Rong. (by Wang Wenbo)

The Endangered Buildings of the Hutongs ▪▪▪

As soon as the conversation turns to the demolition of the hutong alleys and the quadrangle courtyards most people instinctively react: 'they should stop the demolition and keep the traditions of old Beijing.' But another perspective is offered by the residents of the hutong alleys themselves. After all, this is where they have lived for generations.

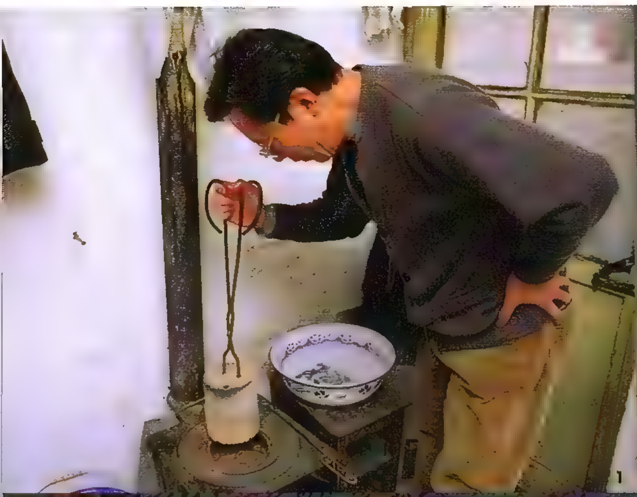
Wang Liqun grew up in the hutong alleys. This year he is 50 and has never left the area around Huanghua Gate. When I visited his home, snow had just fallen over Beijing, covering the Chinese mahogany trees in his yard with a layer of white powder.

Wang's home is on the south side, close by his younger brother Wang Lisen. Among piles of miscellaneous belongings in this small cramped space is a coal stove which the family use for heating in winter. Now that the children have moved out, only Wang and his wife live here along with two dogs Yuan Yuan and Dabao. Wang tells me happily the old building next door will be torn down allowing them to open a small window on that side of the house. That way, they won't need to turn on the light during the day.

Wang's massive wardrobe lies open due to water seepage affecting the wall. "Look, it's covered in water," says Wang Liqun smoothing a hand over the wardrobe back and drawing out a palm covered in water. He says: "One day I fetched the quilt from the wardrobe and discovered it was completely damp. The quilt and much of our clothing is now covered in mould marks!"

What to do with the old homes is quite a headache. The Beijing Residential Management Bureau carries out a yearly inspection in which houses in the hutong alleys are classified into five groups. Only the houses in Grade 5 which are at the most danger of collapsing have a chance to be reconstructed. Wang's house is a Grade 4 house while the Grade 5 house next door will be reconstructed by the end of 2005.

Wang took me next door to his brother's home for a look. What was it like to live in a house where even the window frames were severely misshapen? Says Wang, "People living here have become immune to the dangerous state of the houses. Since most of the people living here are poor we of course welcome changes to the living environment but we can't afford to move out. Government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compensation for moving out only pays enough for us to buy an apartment far from the city centre costing us much more in transport and time. Moreover, there are all kinds of extra costs such as heating in winter, property management fees and so on. At least here in the hutong I am comfortable with what I know."

Simple Living ...

Apart from the courtyard homes, multi-storied communal flats (tong zi lou 筒子樓) can be found among the hutong alleys.

Mr Xie has lived in this flat since he married his wife and now the flat boasts eight family members spread over three generations. The building was constructed in 1952 and reportedly one of China's most famous architects Liang Sicheng participated in the design process. Today, the building is one of the best of its kind in Beijing. Xie and his wife Liu were allocated the flat in 1955 and have lived here with their four sons for the remaining 51 years.

When the Xie family first moved in, the neighbourhood was blessed with many trees and the nearby city gate was still standing. Says Liu, "My mother lived in a bungalow outside the city walls which was much worse so we felt quite gratified at the chance to live here. The walls in this building are thick and even though we are on the ground floor the ceiling is high and airy. Now that I'm old and my legs aren't so great I really don't want to move away from here."

Mr Xie's life follows the daily ritual followed by many Beijing families. After rising, he rides a bike to the local vegetable market and buys the day's necessities. After that he takes the birds out in their cages for some air. Unfortunately, due to bird flu, residents are no longer allowed to raise birds at home; a decision Xie still thinks about with pain. Says Liu, "If we lived in a courtyard we could be much freer. Here, we have to abide by the authorities' measures."

On Top of the Old comes the New ...

Photographer Mr Liu Yiwei has lived among the hutong alleys of Dongzhimen since he was in high school. Now he lives close by Dongzhimen with his Italian wife in a new apartment complex next to the Russian embassy.

Their decision to buy a new apartment was based principally on their expected child Says Liu's wife Balan, "We thought about many factors in choosing an apartment. We didn't want to live in one of those 20-story apartment blocks like pigeons with no air to breathe. In the end we decided on this area

1. Wang Liqun heats his home with a honeycombed briquette stove in the winter.

2. Two dogs, Da Bao and Yuan Yuan, have brought much joy to the Wang family.

3. Although the communal tower is not an ideal place to live, Nanny Liu is reluctant to leave her long-time home.

The Legacy of the Liang-Chen Master Plan

In February 1950 the famous architect Liang Sicheng (son of great modern Chinese thinker and reformer Liang Qichao) wrote a 25,000 report with another architect Chen Zhanxiang entitled 'Suggestions for the Location of the Central People's Government', also known as the 'Liang Chen Master Plan'. The report urged "the earliest decision on the location of the capital administrative district, and consideration of extending the area between the old town and the new western districts into a new centre, according to practical needs and beneficial conditions of development." The report laid out in great detail the crux of Liang and Chen's central idea: 'old and contemporary side by side, drawing on the advantages of new and old.' In the end, the 'Liang Chen Master Plan' was not adopted and old Beijing lost an opportunity for planned preservation. Liang Sicheng at the time said, "In fifty years time, history will prove me right."

56 years have passed and not only have we not woken up to Liang's premonition, we continue to watch the old Beijing fade away before our very eyes. Reports in the Chinese media write that Beijing's old city area is shrinking at the rate of 600 hutong alleys a year and that by 2008 there will be practically no hutongs left in Beijing. Beijing has paid a heavy, heavy price for an Olympic games. As witnessed by the expensive and needless destruction and reconstruction of Yongding Gate, will Beijing be doomed to follow this cycle again and again in the future?

In the old town of today's Rome, ancient Roman ruins can be seen all around, still preserved in their original state. Even if only a fragment of a historical monument remains, the city authorities erect a park around it in order to display its authenticity and historical value. Visitors do not detest its ruined state. Similarly too, the Parisians still live in houses hundreds of

4. Liu Yiwei and his Italian wife only bought a new flat and left the hutong for their son's benefit.

5. Liu Yiwei and his family now live in a new building on the former site of the hutong where Liu loved to wander as a child.

6. Half-demolished walls and broken tiles are a common sight in Beijing nowadays.

years old. Located on small, narrow alleys with cobblestone paving and with statues adorning entrances, you can't help but exclaim at the aesthetic eye of Parisians. And from the wardrobes of this ancient town comes the most modern and contemporary fashion trends emulated the world over.

56 years later, the Liang-Chen Master Plan can now only offer us a historical document to leave for the next generation. When a city loses its culture and identity, and is trampled over and graffitied on, how much longer will it remain attractive in your eyes?

close to Dongzhimen where Liu has memories of growing up." The couple took out a mortgage with the help of a deposit from their parents and will pay the loan off in 8 years.

The Liu family moved into their new home in September 2004. Says Liu, "There have been many great changes in this area. This whole area used to be alleyways where we would play after school. The narrow streets would be crowded with shops and shaded by trees stretching overhead. There was a real feeling of leisurely city life. That was the real old Beijing."

Liu now lives opposite where one of his classmates used to live. " Now the streets are much wider and to the east are new apartment buildings erected after the entire section was razed. To the north still stand a few buildings constructed in the 1980s."

The road widening effectively created two different societies living next to each other. On the west side of the road, traditional Beijing life goes on in the alleyways. On the east side, people from other provinces, returned Chinese from overseas or foreigners live in the new expensive apartment complexes costing between 10,000 and 30,000 yuan per square metre. Sighs Liu, "There really is no 'old Beijing' anymore. Sometimes, I look out the window and feel a deep conflict in my heart."

Liu continues to fell nostalgic for the hutong alley lifestyle and often will take his son and wife for a stroll through the alleys. Balan says, "I like the old alleyways and Chinese culture. This is a place that cannot be replicated in any other part of the world. I hope to leave some memories behind for my child so that he too may one day think back to how it once was."

Translated by Bret Sutcliffe

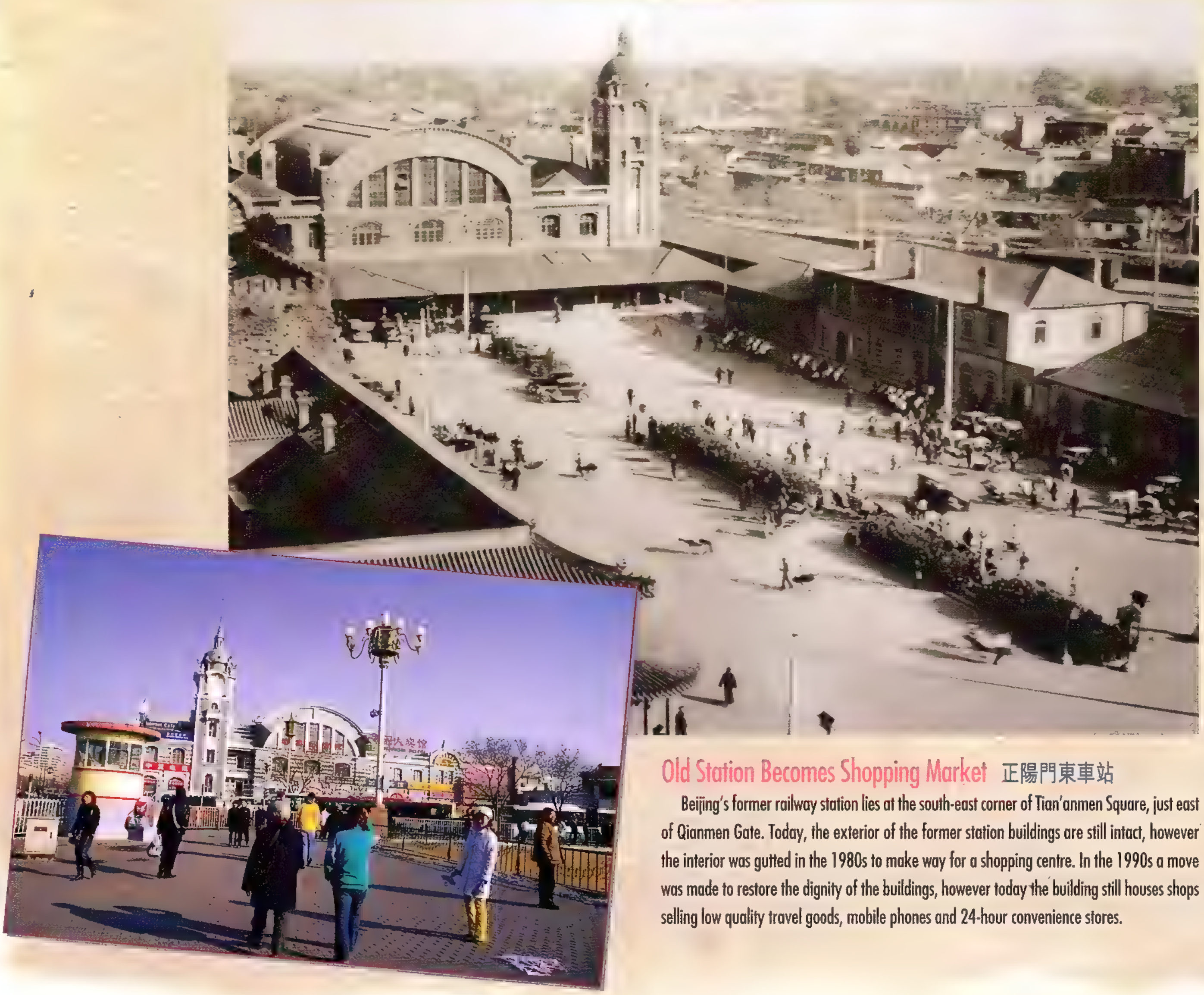
What is a Communal Flat?

Beijing's communal flats were built in the 1950s as a high-density housing arrangement for workers. Their main characteristic is that the bathroom, kitchen and room where the water taps were located were all communal while individual flats were responsible for their own heating. Doors from the communal corridors opened directly into bedrooms thus leaving little room for privacy and necessitating a curtain or screen in front of the door to stop prying eyes. Commentators have joked that such communal flats made ideal living arrangements for young people as there are incessant opportunities for both sexes to mix. In the 1990s, such communal flats began to be dismantled and demolished.

A Hundred Years of Memories

Photos & Article • Yu Qiong

Open a book of photos of Old Beijing and you will discover the changes to today's Beijing are almost beyond comprehension. Perhaps, a hundred years from now people will also look at the photos of Beijing today and wonder where it all went.



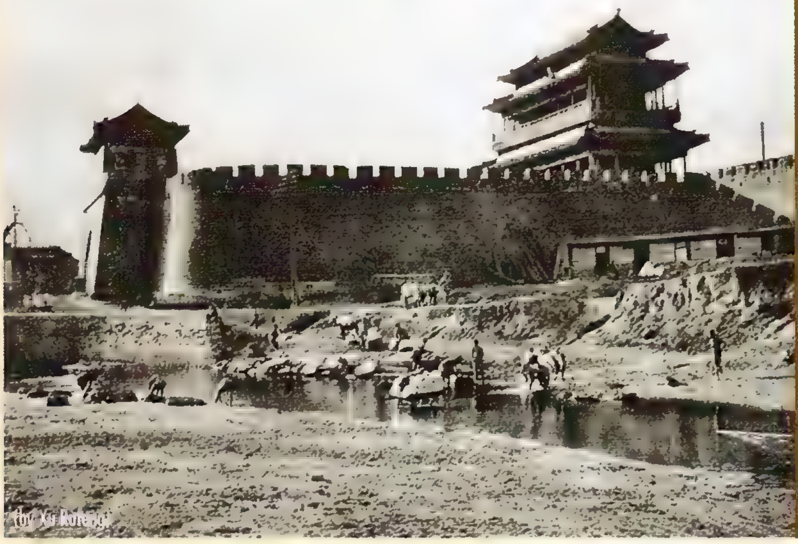
Old Station Becomes Shopping Market 正陽門東車站

Beijing's former railway station lies at the south-east corner of Tian'anmen Square, just east of Qianmen Gate. Today, the exterior of the former station buildings are still intact, however the interior was gutted in the 1980s to make way for a shopping centre. In the 1990s a move was made to restore the dignity of the buildings, however today the building still houses shops selling low quality travel goods, mobile phones and 24-hour convenience stores.

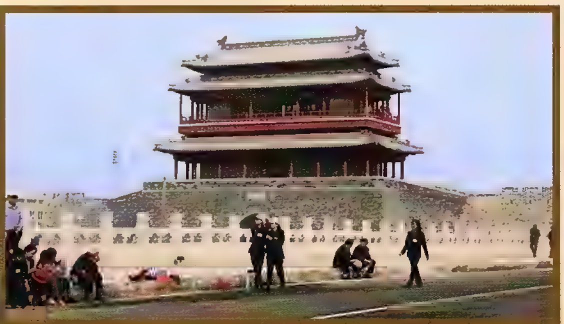
(by Henry Lee)

Streetside Haircut 頭擔子

Modern hairdressers and beauty salons are to be found all over Beijing, but rare is the sight of a group of children huddling around a classmate wrapped up in white cloth receiving a haircut from an elderly gentleman. As the hutong alleys continue to be razed all around Beijing, in a few years this sight too will be confined to the photo album.

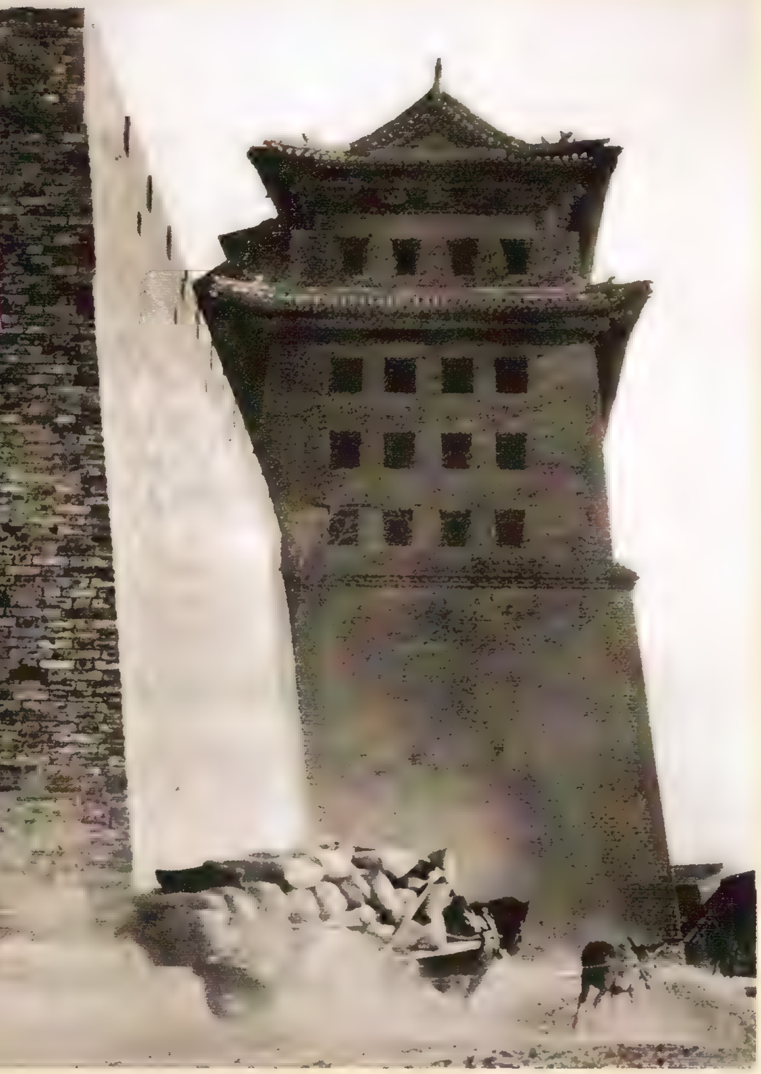


(by Xu Ruteng)



A Cycle of Construction and Demolition - Yongding Gate 永定門

Today, the traditional style Yongding Gate stands lonely and solitary among the city's modern buildings and high-speed freeways. Yongding Gate was built in 1553 during the Ming Dynasty, reconstructed in the Qing Dynasty during the reign of Emperor Qianglong, and then dismantled in 1957 as it was thought to obstruct traffic. On March 10, 2004, work began on its reconstruction as part of Cultural Olympics preservation plan and was completed in 2005.



Expressway Replaces Xizhimen Gate

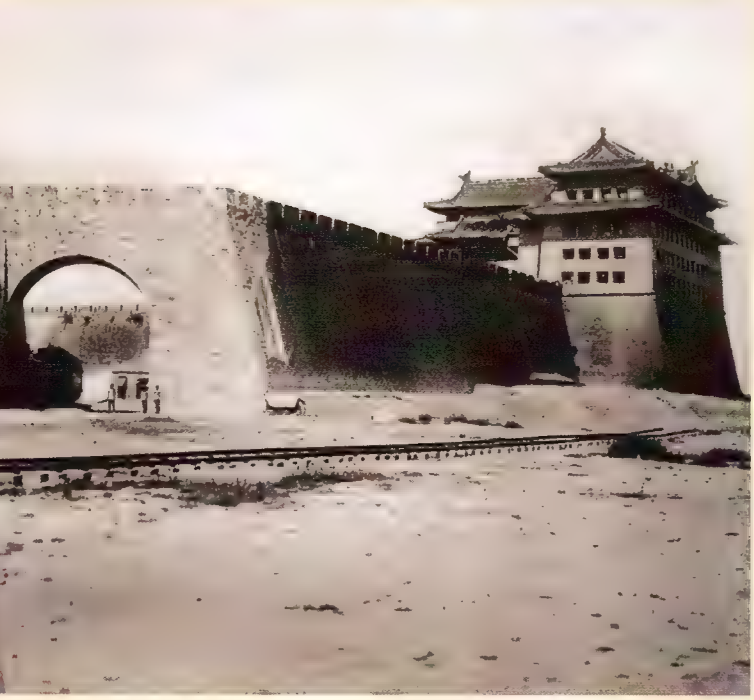
西直門

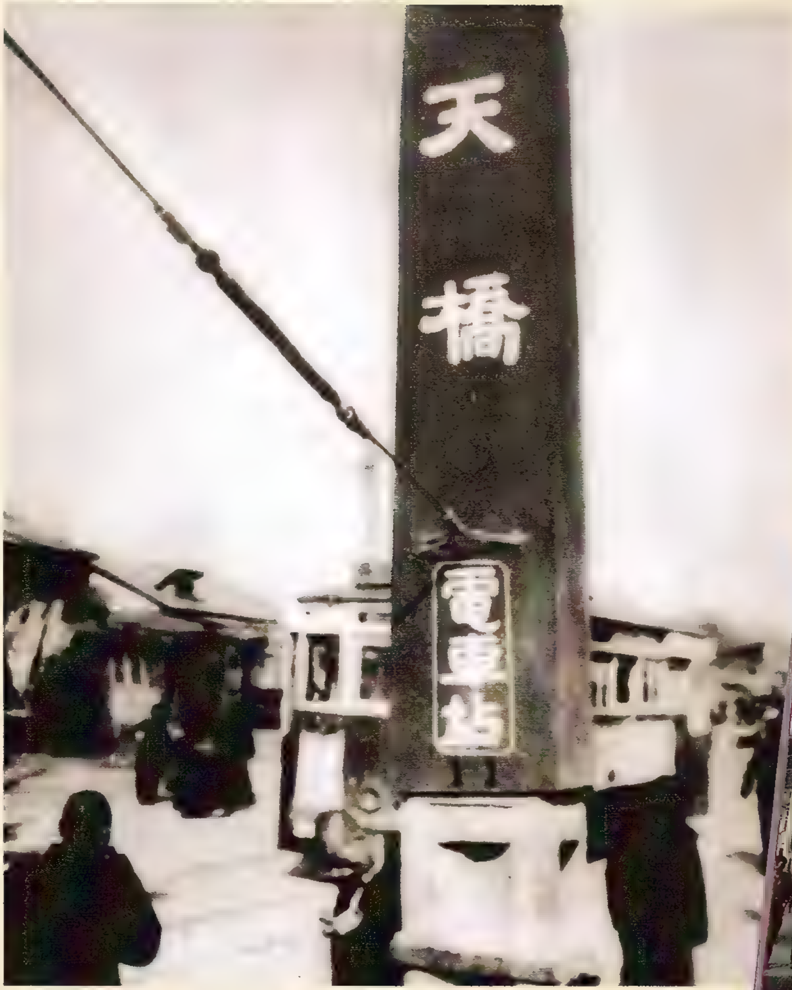
Xizhimen Gate was demolished half a century ago to make way for the city's No. 2 Ring Road. Today, a multi-lane expressway bridge towers above Xizhimen bringing traffic jams and legendary driver confusion to this area once dominated by traditional hutong alleys. Instead, today the area is dominated by the three glass and steel humps of West Ring Plaza.

A Corner of Ming Dynasty City Wall

環城鐵路

Much of the city wall on the southeastern side of the city was torn down in the construction of the railway lines serving Beijing's present railway station. However today a section of wall still remains and visitors can ascend to the top of the wall and gaze down on the railway lines and modern city around them. It is said this part of the city wall only escaped destruction because leftover materials from the construction of the subway lay dormant here for so long.





Tram to the Past 天橋電車站

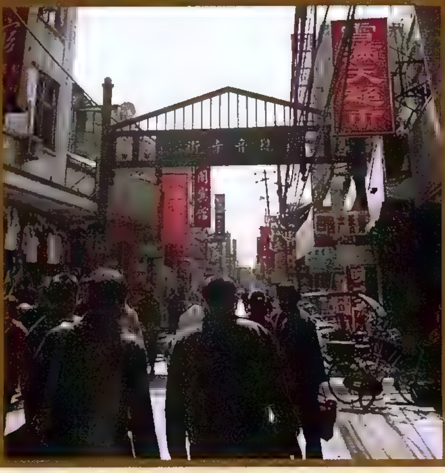
A common feature to many historic cities, trams have become a witness to history. In the old photo books, the Beijing tram station was located next to the Tianqiao Square, at the intersection of Yongdoing Gate Street and Beiwei Road, opposite the Natural History Museum.

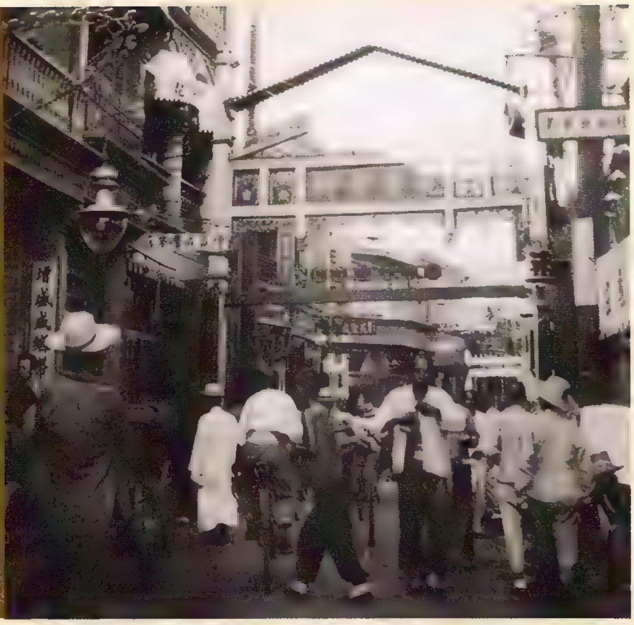
A Tour of the Hutong Alleys by Rickshaw 胡同車夫

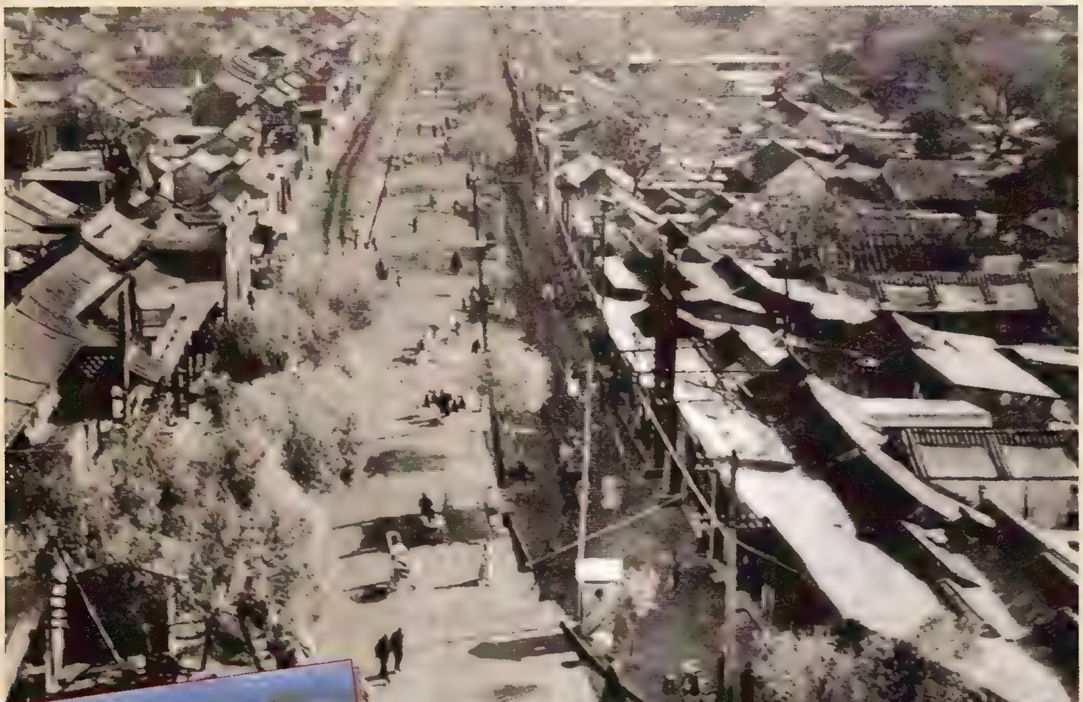
In years past, the rickshaw was an indispensable means of public transport; today it is a quaint experience for tourists visiting the hutong alleys. When the tourist trade is quiet, the rickshaw puller takes a nap. Innocent now perhaps, but when the hutongs finally disappear then the rickshaw puller's innocent sleep won't be on the street, but at home, out of work and left behind.

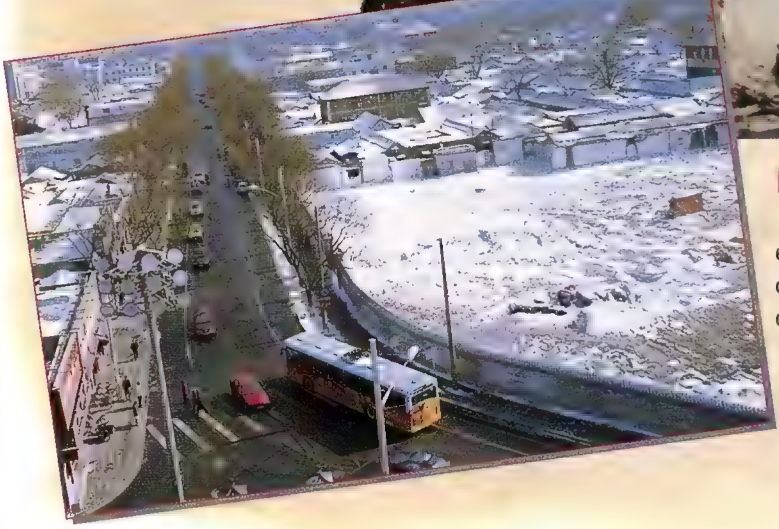
No Longer Peaceful - Guanyin Temple 觀音寺街

On old maps of Beijing, Guanyin Temple Street is now called Dashalan, however there still remains an old memorial arch with 'Guanyin Temple' on it. Today there is little temple tranquility to be found here however; the street is filled with travelers looking for a cheap place to stay.



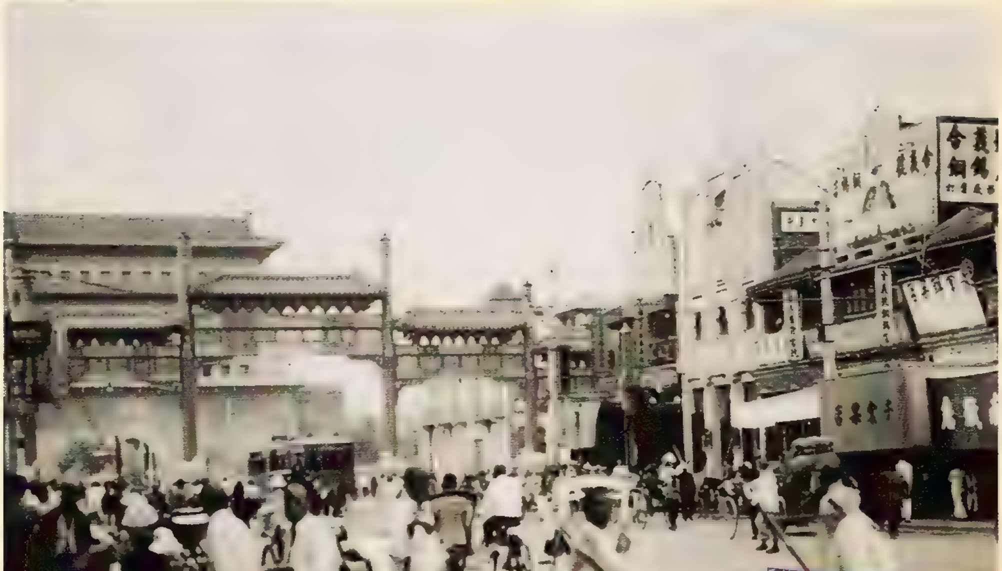






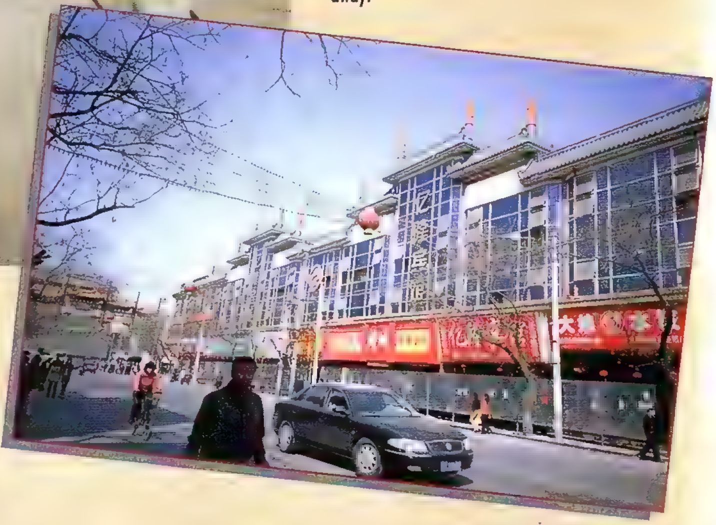
From Alley to Boulevard - Drum Tower East 鼓樓東大街

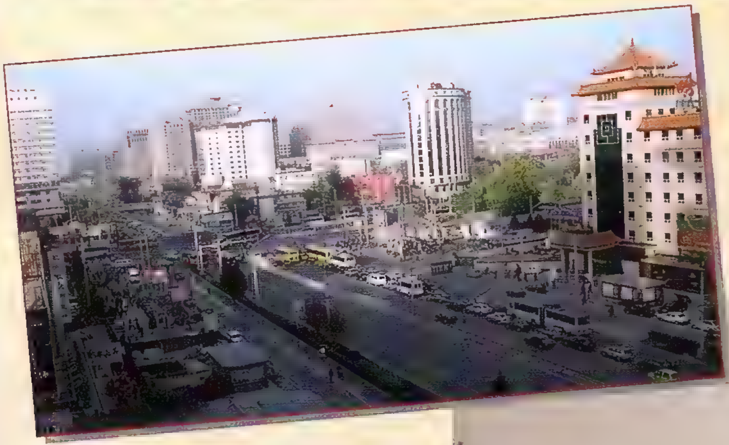
After the winter snows have passed, Beijing receives a rare sky of azure blue. Standing on the east side of the Drum Tower, the wide streets and new street lamps of the scene below replace the camel teams that used to ply the street in years past. The hutong alley area in the bottom right corner has already been razed to the ground.



No Longer the Same - Qianmen 前門大街

To the south of Tian'anmen Square lies Qianmen, for long the liveliest part of Beijing. Today however Qianmen is under construction; shops and buildings on both sides of the road are hidden behind construction panels and in the distance the traditional style Arrow Tower is wrapped in nylon and steel scaffolding. Hardly a place to linger for the pedestrian or tourist, the glorious scenes of yesteryear have long passed away.

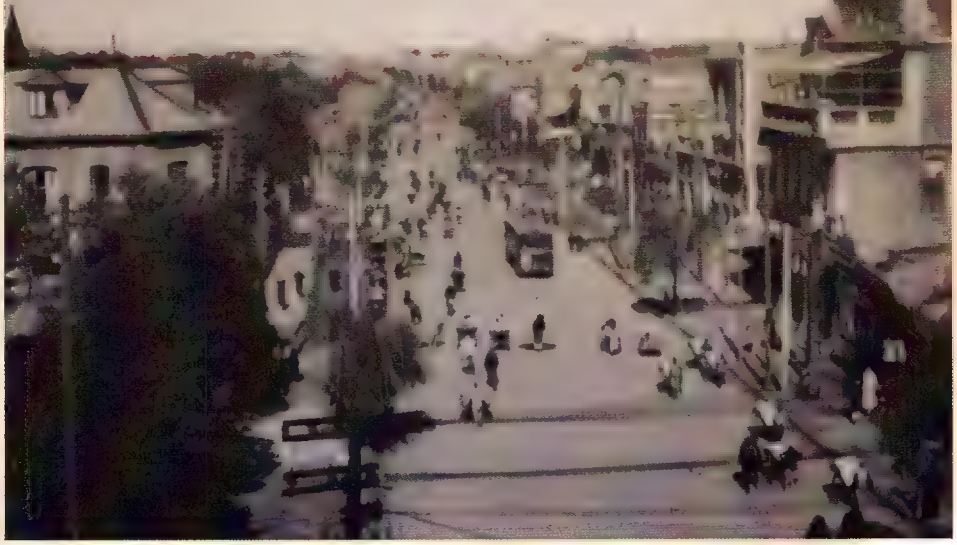




A Name without a Gate - Chongwen Gate Street 崇文門內大街

Chongwen Gate was long ago demolished to make way for the No. 2 Ring Road and today little traditional architecture remains in the area. Looking north from the massive New World Shopping Centre, one instead sees row after row of bland modern office buildings and apartments. Today, Chongwen Gate Street is a major broad thoroughfare, host to an unceasing flow of noisy traffic.

Translated by Bret Sutcliffe



Beijing Travel Tips

Photos & Article • Yu Qiong

The train to Beijing. (by Florence Chan)

Transportation

■ **Railway HK — Beijing:**

Hung Hom (Hong Kong) — Beijing West

Train T98: 1500~1518 (next day)

Beijing West — Hung Hom (Hong Kong)

Train T97: 1247~1310 (next day)

Fares: HK$934 (soft sleeper); HK$601 (lower hard sleeper); HK$587 (middle hard sleeper); HK$574 (upper hard sleeper)

Accommodation

Many hotels built in quadrangle style in Dazhalan and Nanluogu Lane cost cheap room rates and are best places to experience old Beijing. Besides, they are not too faraway from the Tian'anmen Square, Forbidden Palace and underground.

■ **Far-East International Youth Hostel**

Add: 113 Tie Shu Xie Jie, Xuanwu District, Beijing

Tel: (10) 5195 8811

Rates: 60 yuan/bed, 180~250 (standard room)

Features: Altered from a former quadrangle, in which the courtyard is well maintained and elegant. But it is slightly faraway from underground and bus terminus.

■ **Guang Ju Yuan Hotel**

Add: 52 West Street, Dazhalan, Beijing

Tel: 10-6303 1595

Rates: 160~180 yuan (standard room), 60 yuan (four-bed room), 50 yuan (multi-bed room)

Features: Half built as a quadrangle, tidy and comfortable, advantageously located in the most crowded place in Dazhalan.

■ **Green Bamboo Garden**

Add: 113 Nanluogu Lane, Beijing

Tel: 10-6401 3961

Rates: 150~240 (standard room, concession at low season)

■ **Lu Song Yuan Guesthouse**

Add: 11 Bancang Hutong, Kwan Street, Beijing

Tel: 10-404 0436

Rates: 590~695 (standard room, booking made one-month in advance)

Three Must-visit Traditional Hutongs

Most hutongs and old buildings inside are demolished, while there are only a few of them remained. Come to explore them or you will feel sorry of being too late!

1. Da Sha Lan (or Da Zha Lan) 大柵欄

Located close to Liulicang Cultural Street, Dazhalan formerly owned a number of 114 hutongs, 100-plus quadrangles, 49 hostels, 11 residences of famous figures, 21 guilded halls, and 296 wooden towers from the Ming and Qing dynasties. Merchants have been hawking their wares in these alleys for hundreds of years, and some hoary relics still stand — like the Ruifuxiang Silk and Cotton Fabric Store (on Dazhalan Jie), and the Tongrentang Traditional Medicine Shop (just west of Ruifuxiang). Da Guan Lou is the eldest theatre in Beijing. The northeastern side of Dazhalan is to be dismantled. Fortunately, some of the age-old brands are kept in its commercial area.

■ **Entrance of former Xiang Yi Hao Silk Store**

Located at No. 1 Dazhalan, it was invested by a junior eunuch from the Forbidden Palace during the reign of Emperor Guangxu (1871—1908). Today, it has become a mall named Yi Cheng Hou. A wooden building, it is decorated by iron frames with exquisite patterns. It is a relic under the protection of Beijing city level.

■ **Entrance of former Rui Fu Xiang store**

Located at No. 5 Dazhalan, it was first built in 1893, and rebuilt after a fire in 1900. The two-storey brick building is protected by an iron cover of western style. There are relief of flowers and birds on its walls. It is a relic under the protection of Beijing city level.

■ **Former site of Quan Ye Chang**

Located at No. 17 Qianmen Long Fang Tou Tiao and built in 1914, it was the first integrated commercial structure in temporary Beijing. There are three halls combined with three-storey of winding corridors. Part of the building was built in Baroque style, and it is now a relic under the protection of Beijing city level.

■ **Entrance of former Quab Xiang Yu**

Located at No. 5 Zhubao Shi Jie, it is a two-storey wooden structure. The first flat contains classical western pillars which divide the hall into three main areas; the second one is built with an iron corridor. It is a relic under the protection of Beijing city level.

■ **Former site of Bank of Communications**

Located at No. 9 Xiheyuan Jie, it was built base on the design of Chinese architecture Yang Tingbao, which has four storeys and an underground storey. It is built with a special roof and in a taste of Chinese traditional memorial archway.

■ **Yue Wei Cao Tang**

A relic under protection of Xuanwu District, it is now where the Jin Yang Fan Zhuang restaurant locates: 241 Zhushi Kou Xi Da Jie. It was the former residence of Qing scholar Ji Xiaolan during the reign of Emperor Qiaolong (1711—1799).

■ **Bao Du Feng**

The most authentic Beijing snack, quick-boiled tripe. Bao Du: 10 yuan per serving.

Average expenditure per head (hot-pot): 30 yuan

Add: No. 56 Dazhalan Lang Fang Er Tiao (new address)

Tel: (10) 6308 3296

■ **Chen Ji Stewed Pig's Intestine in Brine**

Average expenditure per head: 15 yuan

Add: The second hutong north of Dazhalan West Street, also the east entrance of Qudeng Hutong.

Transport to Dazhalan: Take the metre No. 2 and get off at Qianmen station; or take bus No. 5, 9, 17, 22, 59, 66, or 726.

2. Nan Luo Gu Lane 南鑼鼓巷

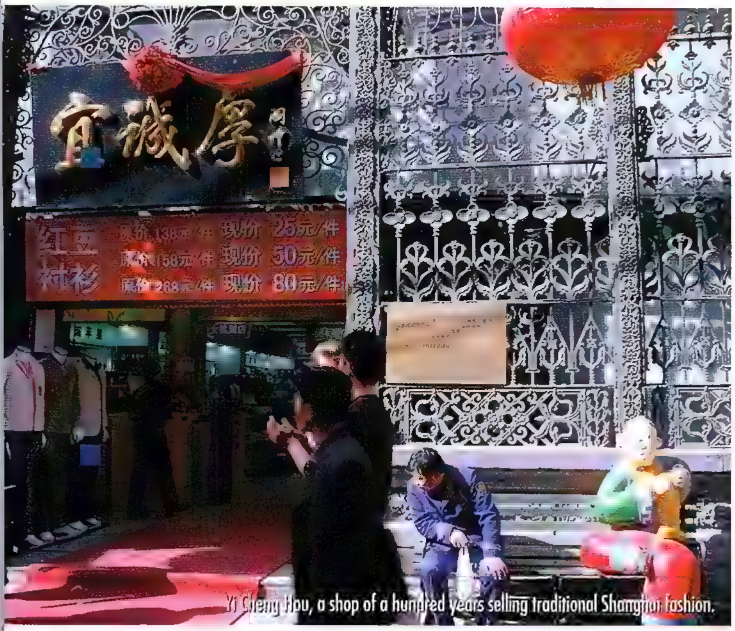
Lanluogu Lane was the first hutong listed in one of the 25 historical sites under the protection of Beijing city. The street is very cultural and rich in history, and has lots of quadrangles. However, they are usually not open for public. In recent years, many exotic bars and cafes have been opened in the street, which has added a cultural taste to the jubilant bar area in Houhai.

■ **Passby Bar**

Add: 108 Nanluogu Xiang

Tel: (10) 8403 8004

Opening hours: 1000~0200


Yi Cheng Hou, a shop of a hundred years selling traditional Shanghai fashion.

Features: Built in a quadrangle style in 1999, highly popular among westerners.
Must-try dishes: Mutton pizza (40~50 yuan); spinach and cheese dumpling (32 yuan)

Yu Shi Ju Jin
Add: 114 Nanluogu Xiang
Tel: (10) 6400 6868
Opening hours: 1100~2400
Features: A restaurant of French-style with modern design. Regular art exhibitions are arranged inside.
Must-try dishes: French set (110 yuan/ person), red wine (15 yuan)

Zhe Li Cafe
Add: 97 Nanluogu Lane
Tel: (10) 8401 4246
Opening hours: 1000~2400
Features: Strong artistic and nostalgic tastes. The owner is a professional photographer who has regular personal exhibition at the cafe regularly.
Must-try dishes: Zhe Li Pizza (35 yuan/ 9 inches)

Sha Le
Add: Opposite to 88 Nanluogu Lane
Tel: (10) 6402 3529
Opening hours: 1000~2400
Features: Built in quadrangle style, a boutique and elegant cafe. There is a thematic music party "Nomad Friday" on every Friday from 2200~2400.

Hongren Fang Tavern
Add: 111 Nanluogu Lane
Opening hours: 1000~0200
Features: A very classical Chinese cafe which has combined both traditional and modern. It has attracted lots of youngsters and students of Chinese operas. The tavern is renowned for different kinds of beers manufactured from China and abroad.

Wen Zi Nai Luo Dian
Add: 49 Nanluogu Lane
Tel: (10) 6405 7621
Opening hours: 1030~2230
Features: Traditional snacks of old Beijing with special tastes, such as yogurt, milk cake roll, milk pudding, almond bean cured, etc.

3. Shi Sha Hai Lake 什刹海

It is formed by Qianghai and Houhai lakes, located between Beihai Park and Drum Tower. The area has beautiful natural landscape, and is divided by Yinding Bridge.

Kao Rou Ji Fan Zhuang
Add: 14 Qian Hai Dong Yuan
Tel: (10) 6404 2554
Features: Located beside Yinding Bridge and established in 1848, the restaurant is famous for its stir-fried veggies, roasted beef, mutton and duck. All the dishes are carefully selected and cooked, while the roasted meat taste fresh not oily.

Kong Yi Ji Restaurant
Add: Opposite to the former residence of Song Qingling, western-most of Houhai
Tel: (10) 6618 4915, 6618 4917, 6618 4938
Features: It serves traditional dishes and liquors from Shaoxing city in Zhejiang Province.

Shuai Fu Fan Zhuang
Add: 19 Qianhai Beiyuan Jia, northernmost of Lotus Market
Tel: (10) 6618 5348
Features: It serves exquisite Sichuan cuisine.

No 15 of Qianhai Bei Yuan
Add: 15 Qianhai Bei Yuan, northernmost of Lotus Market
Tel: (10) 6617 5558
Features: It serves home-made dishes, such as roasted duck with local fruit from Jilin Province. The French glass in the traditional restaurant feasts diners with a panorama of Shishahai Lake.

Jingwei Mian Da Wang
Add: Xi Da Jie on Di'anmen, between Shishahai and Di'anmen
Features: It serves dishes of old Beijing, such as "zha jiang mian" (noodles with spicy minced meat and paste), "ma dou fu" (dehydrated bean curd), bean sauce, etc.
Buses to Shishahai: Take bus No. 5, 60, 107, 124, 834, or 839 and get off at Gulou (Drum Tower) stop; or take No. 13, 42, 111, 107, 118, or 701 and get off at the rear entrance of Beihai Park.

Traveller's Bar at the Yundong Far-East International Youth Hostel. (by Florence Chan)

Da Guan Lou is Beijing's earliest theatre.

Foreign Love in China

I made friends with Isa from Switzerland at the Sichuan Tagong horse-riding fair when we both stayed in a lama's home. At the end of the same year, we met again by chance in Tagong and decided to ride bikes across the grassland heading to a nun's temple. What I remember most was that Isa used Tibetan butter oil (shortening), honey and flour to make plenty of tasty biscuits for the New Year celebration.

Photos & Article · Xiao Yu

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Last summer, I went to visit Isa at her new home in Sweden. Her husband made tea for us and we recalled the pleasure of travelling in China, bringing smiles to our faces throughout our conversation.

The Bond with Tibet

Isa has lived in Chengdu for four years learning Chinese medicine. She arrived in China in the spring of 2000 during the May 1 holiday period. She went from Chengdu to Kangding with her classmates where they had many new experiences. Since they could not find suitable accommodation in Kangding they decided to set off for the Tagong Grassland. They had no idea how long it would take to get there and did not even know whether they could find a place to stay. Nevertheless, using halting Mandarin they managed to buy tickets and set off.

As Isa told me, when the car passed through the Zheduola Mountain pass which stands at 4,298 metres above sea level, they saw snow covered hills, grasslands, herds of cattle and sheep, stone houses and people who tied red scarves on their heads with

1. The simple wedding with her husband in Chengdu.

2. Tagong Grassland in northwestern Sichuan.

3. Sichuan cuisine is Isa's favourite.

4. Isa loves to travel from China's big cities to small towns in Yunnan.

5. Isa with her husband in Beijing.

large earrings and bright clothes. The car arrived at the small town of Tagong where they could only find a few houses. Since there were no hostels or motels in Tagong at that time they were invited to stay overnight inside the temple. This marked the beginning of Isa's journey in Tibet.

Isa said, "There are a lot of similarities between Sweden and Tibet, for instance geographically, both have grasslands, forests and lakes. There are even similarities in our eating habits, meat and milk feature strongly in our diets. Therefore, I feel I am at home when I am in Tibet." When asked what was the most unforgettable thing to about Tibet, she looked at her friend beside her and smiling replied, "The men here like to dress up themselves a lot. At one time, my friend and I lived in the same room with two men. After a while I discovered what they hid under their broad Tibet gown were a knife (for cutting meat at meals) and a can of hair spray!" Another unforgettable time was when I was a guest with a Tibetan family. At New Year, I was required to sing or dance with every female. Luckily, they allowed me to use my mother-tongue to perform otherwise, I would have to dress up like a yak to entertain them."

The Love for China

In 2003, Isa continued her trip in China with a digital camera and was then able to create a website to share her latest journey with her friends. These included her time living in Chengdu, the festivities in Tibet, her journey to Beijing, the unique architectural designs in Yunnan and many other things of interest.

Isa likes to travel with her own bike whether she is in Basel, Switzerland or Chengdu in China. But she became sad when talking about Chengdu; when she first arrived there some years ago the roads were narrow and cyclists could enjoy beautiful scenery along the road. However, since the modernization of the city the roads have become wider and choked with traffic making cycling a dangerous activity. In addition, a lot of the small, old and quaint stores have moved to other places. When in China, Isa does not feel like a foreigner, she feels an affinity for the nation and it's people and she is upset by the eroding of the old way of life.

Isa has travelled around Europe on her bike. She knows Italian, Spanish, Greek and French. Despite her language prowess she did not manage to learn the Sichuan dialect in Chengdu. She said people in Chengdu speak too fast and she could not understand anything! The traditional plays, however attracted her greatly due to their special tones and costumes.

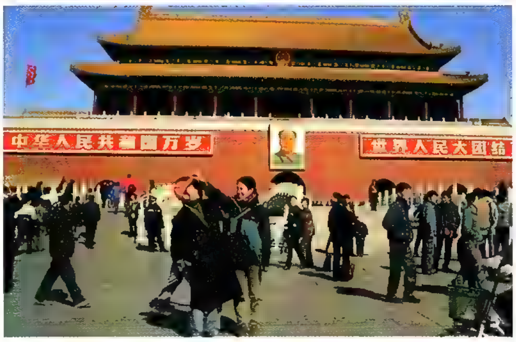
Chinese cuisine is undoubtedly her favourite. She skillfully picked up her chopsticks and said, "I miss the Sichuan cuisine so much after returning to Sweden. Sometimes I need to travel a long way to nearby Asian markets to get those Chinese ingredients."

Following the Husband

Isa's husband is a local Chinese man from Kangba area whose homeland is the Tagong Grassland, which is also one of the most favourite places for Isa in Tibet. They lived together for three years before they held a simple but delightful wedding party last March.

The traditional Chinese and Tibetan cultures have touched Isa in these few years. She told me, "People in Tibet believe in Buddhism so deeply so I was also affected." Talking about the future, Isa hopes that one day she can have her own stone house on the Tagong Grassland, with a herd of cattle, sheep, and horses, but with one most important addition, a jeep!

Translated by Jamie Wong


中华人民共和国万岁
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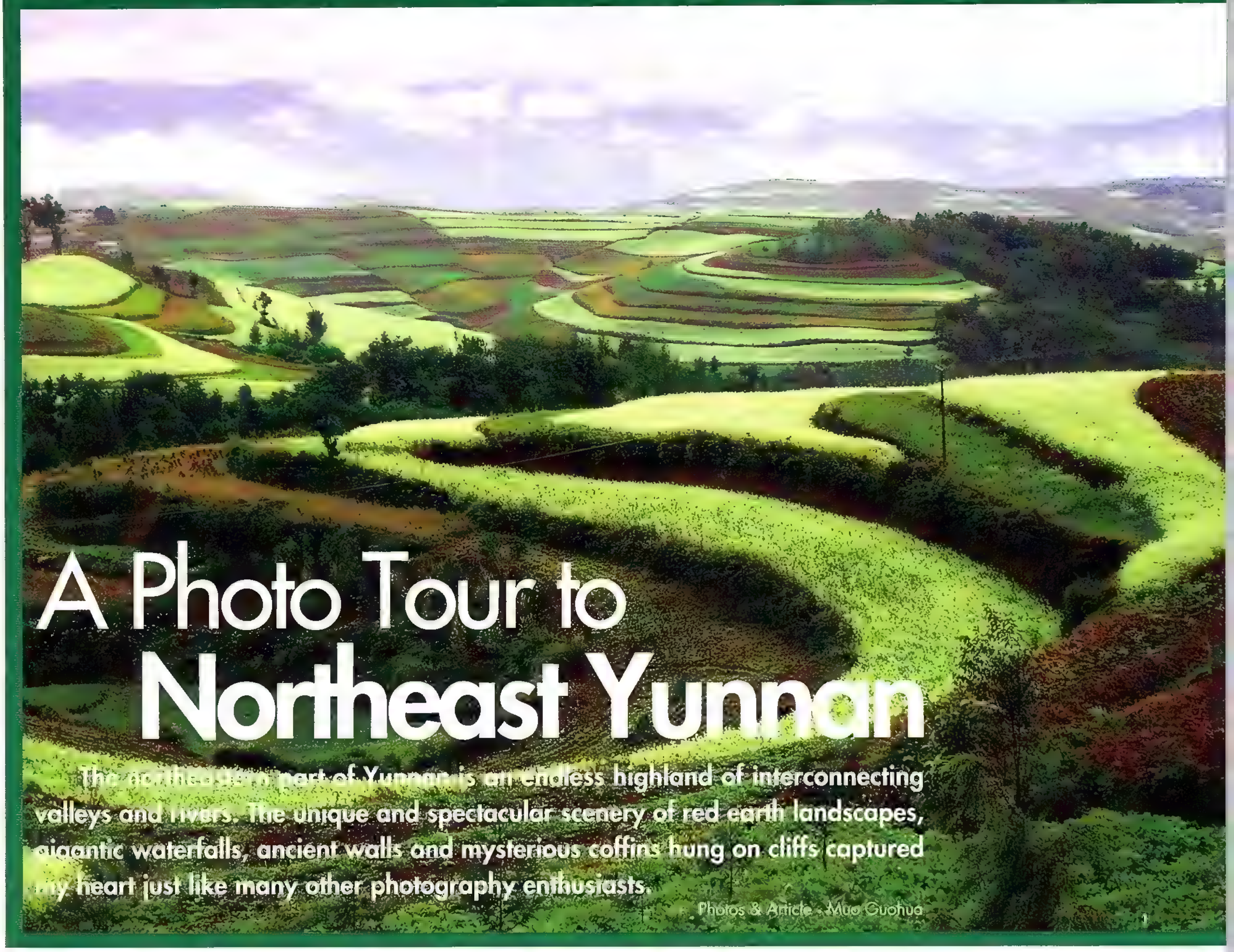

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A Photo Tour to Northeast Yunnan

The northeastern part of Yunnan is an endless highland of interconnecting valleys and rivers. The unique and spectacular scenery of red earth landscapes, gigantic waterfalls, ancient walls and mysterious coffins hung on cliffs captured my heart just like many other photography enthusiasts.

Photos & Article · Muo Guohua

Red Earth Landscape in Dongchuan

I set off from the provincial capital, Kunming in the morning and took a coach towards the north. After making its way unsteadily through the hills for three hours, it arrived at a town with many hawkers on both sides of the road. Motorbikes and vehicles of all types including carts loaded with cows jammed together making me feel even more worried about being late to my destination. Luckily, the journey continued and soon we were traversing the bumpy roads in the countryside. The coach swayed seriously at times until it reached the land of red earth where there were

3

plenty of colourful fields. It was really magnificent! I got off the coach at around 3 p.m. and I started my photo taking instantly without having my lunch, as I couldn't wait! I went to a special place as instructed, overlooking this area towards the town of Dongchuan. Chains of mountains rose up on both sides and this together with a broad view of the terrace fields made it look like an enormous, colourful mat. I could not help taking photographs using all my three cameras. You must not miss this area if you love photography.

The ancient walls and Plain of Huize

As I travelled further the bus meandered up the hills in a zigzag way and sometimes brushed the edge of the cliff. What an exciting experience! We arrived at the Huize Great Plain after passing dozens of hills. There was a trading street near the bus station but only a few people were investigating the stalls that were selling mainly trendy products. A few people looked at me strangely when I took photographs on the street since there were not many tourists. The most interesting thing I discovered was that each store hung a bronze coin at the front door and that Huize was once a place for the minting of these coins. These bronze coins could definitely symbolize the bright history of the city.

Dousha Town on the Ancient Tea Caravan Route

I took a train from Zhaotong to Dousha, which is on the famous Ancient Tea Caravan Route. This route was once the only passage through northern Yunnan before development. The flagstone path was still there, somehow reflecting its prosperous history.

The entrance of Dousha Town is an area sprinkled with rivers and cliffs. The area is known for coffins hanging on the cliff-face more than 60 metres above the water level. It made me wonder how the ancient people could have placed the coffins in such a dangerous spot. All that I could find out was that the coffin belonged to an aggressive tribe in the past.

The Magnificent Huanglianhe Waterfall

The Huanglianhe waterfall is a well-known tourist spot in northeastern Yunnan famous for its steep valleys. My destination, the great waterfall lay five kilometres away from the town and together with the drizzle falling that day it was really like paradise. As I approached by taxi I could hear its thunder-like sound and could easily see the two giant streams pouring down from above. It was marvelous! One of the waterfall streams can be crossed by a footbridge, so you can imagine how exciting it will be to walk on it when you visit this area.

Translated by Jamie Wong

Tips for the Traveller

Transport:

Kunming-Dongchuan: Travel from the eastern or northern Kunming passenger bus stop 165 km, about 3 hours, 28 yuan; take a bus to red earth land: 2 hours, 15 yuan

Dongchuan-Huize: 4 hours, 13 yuan

Huize-Zhaotong: Train from Zhao to Yanjin, 2.5 hours, 10 yuan; take a mini-van from Yanjin to Dousha Town, 3 yuan

Zhaotong-Daguan: Train journey 2 hours, 7 yuan; Daguan to Huanglianhe Waterfall, 15 yuan

Zhaotong-Kunming: Air ticket 540 yuan, flight duration about one hour

Accommodation:

Dongchuan Red Earth Land: Hostel, 10 yuan, Tel: 871-2568 598, 13354909125

Huize: Golden Dragon Motel, standard double room, 120 yuan. Tel: 874-5685 098

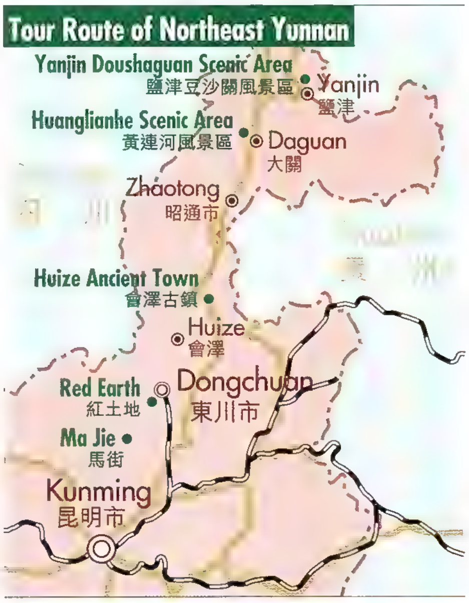
Dousha Town: One may stay in hostel which overlooks the whole town, 10~15 yuan per bed, Tel: 870-6931 165

Daguan: Hunag Lian He Motel (located at the entrance of the scenic area), standard double room, 160 yuan. Tel: 871-5622572

Admissions:

Daguan Huanglianhe Waterfall: 30 yuan

Huize Lake Museum: 10 yuan

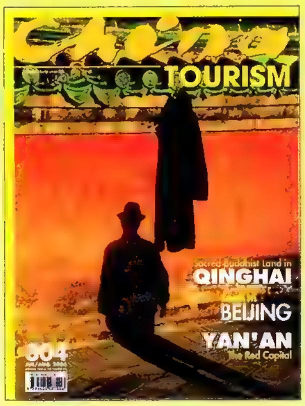


1. The magnificent red-earth land in Dongchuan. The colourful terraces make it popular among photography enthusiasts.

2. Dousha Ancient Town is situated in the Ancient Tea Caravan Route. Its smooth and shiny flagstone path reflects its prosperous history.

3. The mysterious coffins on the cliff are of special interest.

4. The small Buddha statues inside the museum.



Readership Survey

China Tourism always appreciates feedback from its readers. In accordance with your suggestions, we have recently added a variety of new columns. Still, we need to know more of your opinions, including criticisms and suggestions. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to us. Thank you!

Please give your evaluation of the stories in this issue and your overall impression of *China Tourism.*

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Feature I: Huangnan Prefecture, Qinghai	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feature II: Lost in Beijing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Special Report: Zhao Cheng'an & Xinjiang	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nature: Beijing River	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
City Snaps: The Red Capital	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Photographs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cover	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Articles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Travel Tips	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Art Design	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other Opinions: ____________________

____

Name: (Mr./Ms./Mrs.) ____________________
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Age: __________ Occupation: __________ Number of trips to China in the last 5 years: __________

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☐ Hotel Name: ____________________ ☐ Others ____________________

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☐ Planning trips ☐ General interest in China's customs, scenery, etc. ☐ Business
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What do you like most about *China Tourism*?

____

Are you happy with the factual content of *China Tourism*? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What are your suggestions for improvement?

____

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. It provides us with invaluable feedback which will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine for you.

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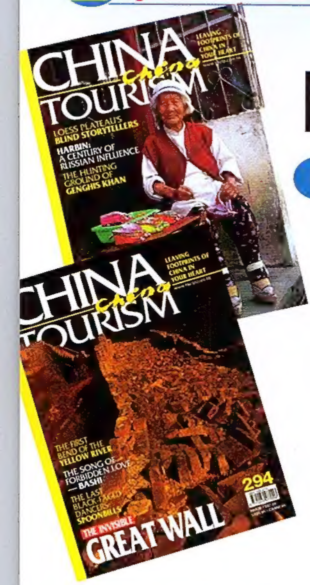

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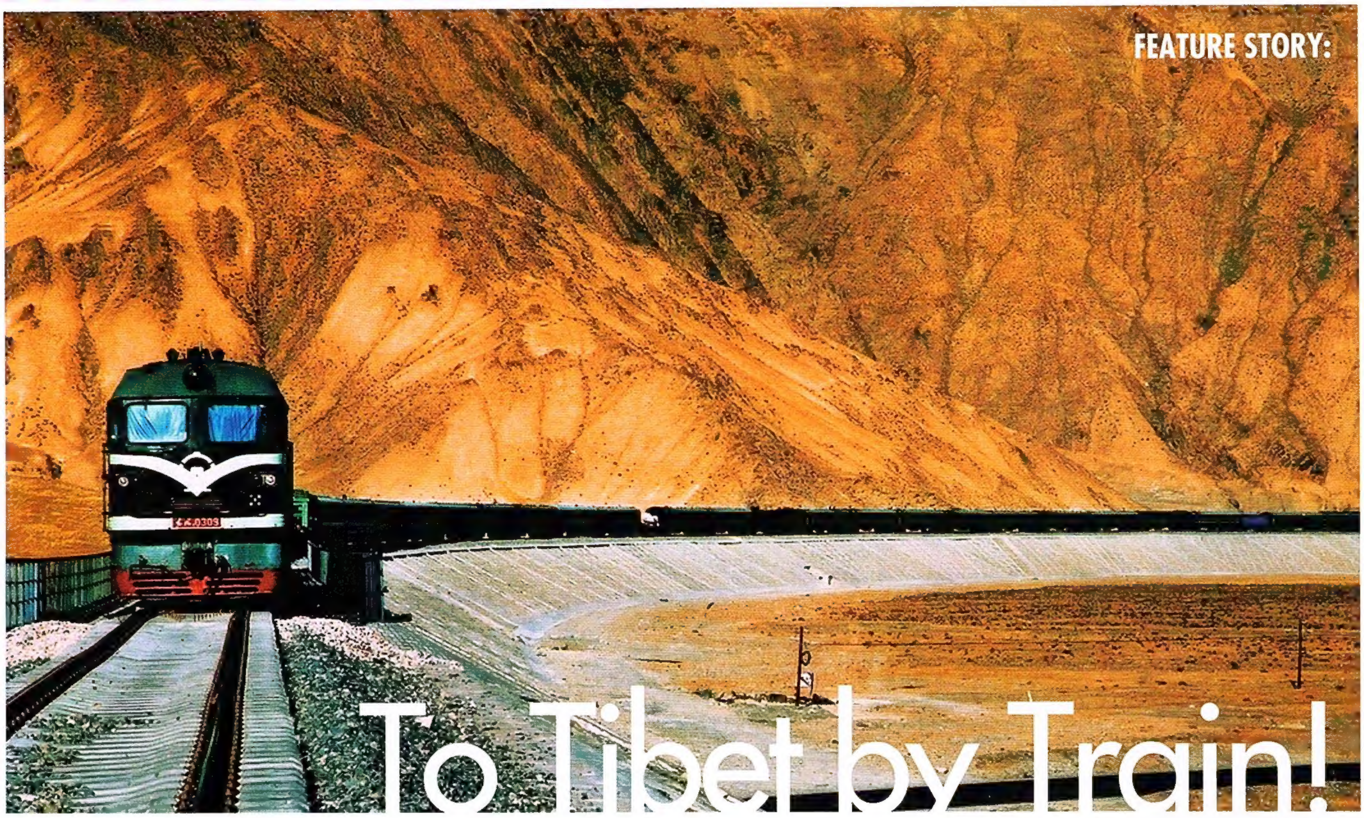


FEATURE STORY:

To Tibet by Train!

Starting from this July 1, the transportation means to the world's "third pole" has to be renewed — the 1,956-km long Qinghai-Tibet Railway standing 5,072 metres above sea level has officially opened, and is the world's only highland railway which passes a piece of permanent frozen earth extending 550 km in length. Starting from Xining city in Qinghai Province, it reaches the Qadam Basin, Kunlun Mountains, Hoh Xil (no man's land), origin of Yangtze River, Tanggula Mountains, and finally reaches the sacred city of Lhasa.

Our correspondent will cover an overall report of the planning and construction of the railway, including the difficulties that the railway workers and experts have faced, as well as present to our readers the environment and facilities of the train.

LANDSCAPES:

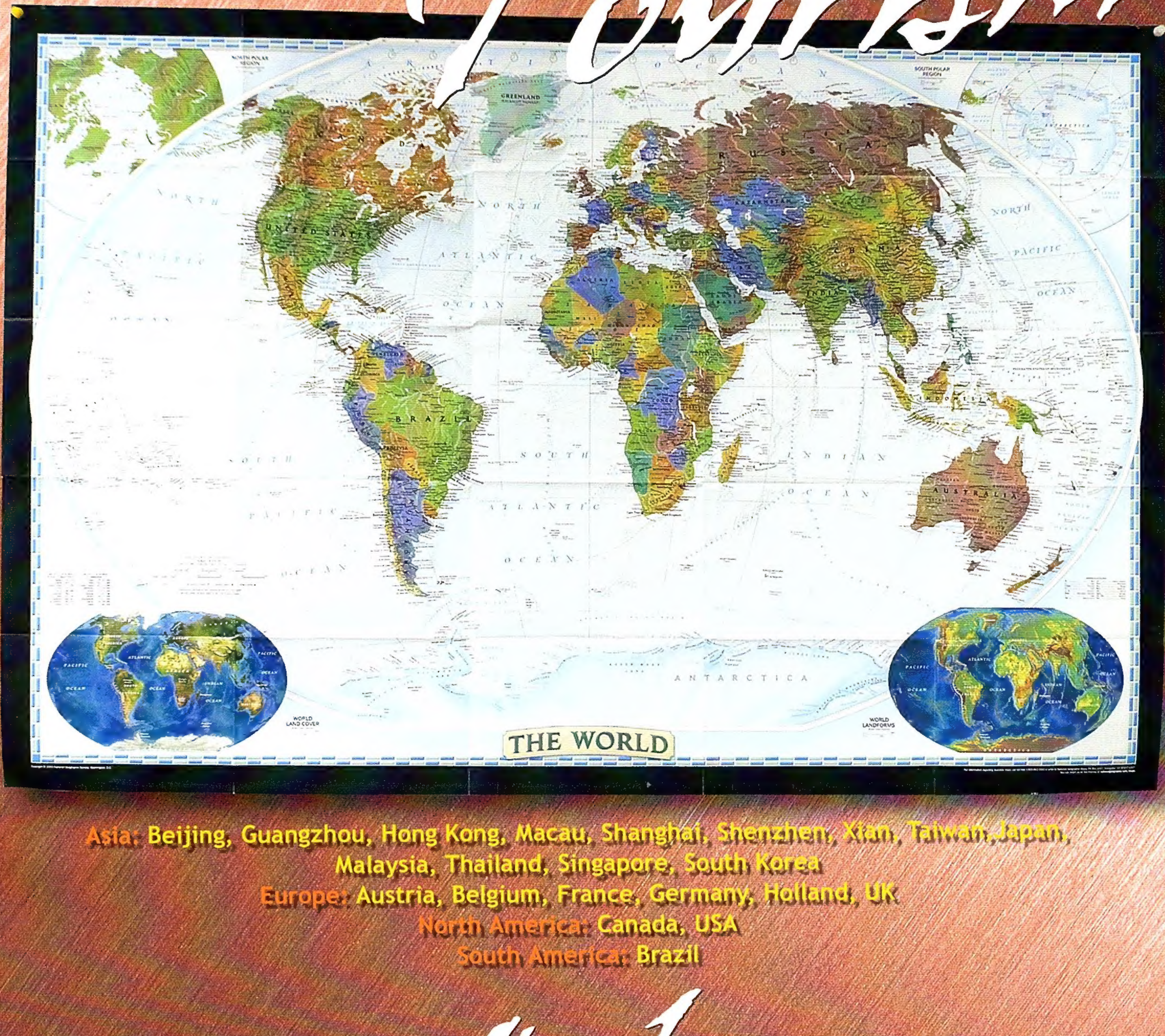
Green-headed Mt Liangshan

In Chinese we describe a cuckold as "wearing a green hat". However, the Liangshan Mountain neighbouring Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Hunan Province boasts the feature that trees only grow on every hump-shaped peak. Welcome to learn more about this less-known yet idyllic destination.

DISCOVERIES:

Living with the Mosuo Ethnicity

Sandwiched between Sichuan and Yunnan provinces there lives a village of the Mosuo minor ethnicity. Having stayed there for four years, the author recorded the locals' life both in words and by photographs, telling the outsiders lovely stories happened here — a land where she feels like home.



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